

# **OCCUPATIONAL COMMITMENT IN PRIVATE HIGHER EDUCATION SECTOR: WORK-LIFE BALANCE, JOB BURNOUT AND THE MEDIATING EFFECT OF SUPPORTIVE CULTURE**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to study the effect of occupational commitment (OC) toward work-life balance (WLB) and job burnout with the mediating effect of a supportive culture (SC) in the context of employees in the private higher education sector in Malaysia. This paper adopted a purposive sampling technique among academics in private higher education in Malaysia. A quantitative approach using Partial Least Square PLS-SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) method was applied to analyse the data. The results show that OC is positively related to SC and SC has a high potential for lowering job burnout. The study also found that SC positively affects WLB. Furthermore, SC was found to elucidate the effect between OC, WLB and job burnout among employees in the private higher education sector. The study has two major theoretical implications. The study reaffirms the existing theory by demonstrating that OC, WLB, and job burnout are significantly related through support culture as a mediator. In addition, the study extends the existing theory by putting forward that understanding the effect of OC on employees' work behaviour in the private higher education research model can account for the variations in different sectors and contexts.

**Keywords:** occupational commitment, job burnout, work-life balance, supportive culture, private higher education

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The changes in global development and increasingly demanding environments have placed great pressure on employee's commitment to their job, especially in the higher education industry. In today's world, academics are expected to play additional roles with an emphasis on teaching and learning innovations, research publications, securing research funding, administrative work,

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community work, and consultation services (Houston, Meyer, & Paewai, 2006; Bennett, Roberts, Ananthram, & Broughton, 2018). With great expectations from the university and society, academics are constantly challenged with increased workloads and accountability. These challenges have provoked various studies that are geared toward understanding the importance of organisational behavior theory among academics. For example, job satisfaction (Houston et al., 2006), WLB (Chaudhry, 2012; Lindfelt, Ip, Gomez, & Barnett, 2018), job burnout (Byrne, Chughtai, Flood, Murphy & Willis, 2013), intention to leave (Cho & Huang, 2012) and organisational commitment (Arif & Farooqi, 2014), to name a few.

In recent years, researchers have devoted a considerable amount of time to the study of job burnout and WLB issues among academics. Academics in private universities are employees in human service. Thus, they are very susceptible to job burnout (Chen et al., 2014; Noor & Ismail, 2016; Khairunneezam, Siti Suraini & Nurul Nadirah, 2017; Mohamed et al., 2021). In most academic settings, academics are given two tasks dedicated to them and incorporated into their yearly key performance index: teaching and research. Specifically, competition is high among private universities in Malaysia, especially universities that collaborate with established universities overseas, where academics are expected to meet overarching requirements. The role conflict faced by many academics in the private university setting, which includes teaching and research, has increasingly elevated the stress level among academics. On the other hand, while dealing with research and teaching, academics are also expected to pay attention to student engagement in private universities, focusing on profit-making and student intake (Singh, Kumar & Srivastava, 2020). This situation jeopardises their WLB and contributes significantly to job burnout, which leads to extensive adverse outcomes.

Among all the areas of investigation, OC has become a fundamental research interest among management scholars in the academic profession. OC can be explained as the mental and emotional link between an employee and their occupation (Yuan & Li, 2012). It was argued that the focus of employee commitment has shifted from organisational to occupational aspects, whereby employees are more likely to commit to their occupation rather than the organisation that they are attached to (Yuan & Li, 2012; Yuan, Yu, Li, & Ling, 2014; Tee, Cham, Low, & Lau, 2021). Past studies have consistently reported that employees who are emotionally attached to their occupation rather than the organisation have a positive impact on their attitude and behaviour at work (Blau, 2009; Yuan & Li, 2012; Yuan et al., 2014; Yousof, Sanders, & Abbas, 2015). In other words, professionals tend to be more productive and committed to their work if they love their job rather than the organisation. This situation is no exception for the academic profession as the academics are required to fulfil the requirements reflected in their institution's performance appraisal system.

In addition to the above, it is suggested that employees who are committed to their occupation demonstrate a higher level of confidence and competence in dealing with their job (Weng & McElroy, 2012; Numminen, Leino-Kilpi, Isoaho, & Meretoja, 2016; Agarwala et al. 2020). Employees' commitment to their profession can promote teamwork and harmonious oriented culture, which will enhance their level of competitiveness. The increased OC further promotes internal linkages and closer relationships among colleagues and cultivates a SC (Yuan et al., 2014; Numminen et al., 2016). Research has shown that SC formed from OC could further enhance WLB and reduce job burnout among the staff (Seierstad & Kirton, 2015). However, academics face significant challenges that affect their OC. This scenario significantly impacts university performance, and this pressure can be reflected in academic WLB and job burnout (Kim, 2006;

Roslan et al., 2015; Adisa, Mordi, & Osabutey, 2017). There is substantial local evidence supporting an increase in burnout among local academics, specifically in local research universities, compared to local private universities (Khairunneezam et al., 2017; Kassim et al., 2020; Li, Li, & Castano, 2020). Broadening the view in understanding job burnout and WLB, the coping mechanisms incorporated by academics are more maladaptive: venting, denial, substance use, and behavioural disengagement. All these behaviours were due to the academics' lack of resources in dealing with work-related stress in private university teaching, including teaching, research, student consultation and collaboration.

Despite the importance of OC and its impact on the higher education sector, the review of the past literature found that less attention has been given to the research in this area which requires further investigation (Yousof et al., 2015; McCarthy et al., 2016). Therefore, this study makes an initial effort to investigate the effect of OC on WLB and job burnout among academics. Moreover, the mediation effect of SC is also examined in the integrated model proposed in this study.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. *Social Exchange Theory*

The current study adopted the Social Exchange Theory (SET) to describe the understanding of an employee's OC in an academic setting by exploring employee's behaviour in the form of positive reciprocation. The perception of organisation culture, especially an SC, significantly affects how they perceive the organisation. If the organisation presents itself by providing good teamwork and a pleasant environment to work in, that gives employees a sense of wellness. Ultimately, employees, in return, reciprocate positively towards their performance in the organisation (Tee et al., 2021).

### 2.2. *Occupational Commitment in the Workplace*

The commitment concept in organisational behaviour has been an area of interest in many studies (Becker, 1960; Cho & Huang, 2012; Numminen et al., 2016). The idea of employee commitment toward organisations is quickly fading due to the high number of restructuring processes for organisations that have taken place over the years (Yuan & Li, 2012). Yuan et al. (2014) further posited that the undesired restructuring process for organisations negatively impacts employees' job insecurity and the level of their anxiety. The result of the shift from organisational commitment to OC has garnered the attention of scholars because it was found that employees who are emotionally attached to their occupations are more likely to commit to their work and achieve organisational identity (Weng & McElroy, 2012; Yuan et al., 2014). Hence, many organisations have been trying very hard to cultivate commitment from their employees to retain them and remain sustainable in their business operations (Cho & Huang, 2012).

OC can be explained as the bond created by the employees with the occupation (Blau, 2009). In other words, OC can be conceptualised as one's attitude towards their profession, which can link emotional and cognitive attachment to their profession (Weng & McElroy, 2012). A review of past studies shows that employees who develop positive feelings towards their occupation will contribute to the performance of the organisation that they are attached to (Lee, Carswell & Allen, 2000; Hsiang et al., 2007; Yousof et al., 2015). It has been suggested that employees with high

levels of OC tend to have more positive emotions and higher engagement with their occupation (Weng & McElroy, 2012). Moreover, an individual's occupation is also significantly related to their image and attitude towards the organisation (Cho & Huang, 2012). Hence, this could be why employees are committed to their occupation rather than the organisation, which explains the shift from organisational commitment to OC over the years (Lee et al., 2000).

In addition, individuals with a high degree of OC will advocate what is necessary to safeguard their profession and perform according to the needs of the job (Cho & Huang, 2012). Moreover, employees who identify themselves with the occupation they pursue, tend to intensify their commitment to the occupation, in which the organisation reaps the benefits of this positive behaviour (Yuan & Li, 2012; Tee et al., 2021). Recent studies have also addressed the importance of OC toward building harmonious labour relations. For example, employees can identify themselves with the occupation and organisation at a much later stage and not at an initial stage, thus eventually forming stability in their career (Yuan & Li, 2012). Previous literature has also shown the importance of OC to organisational performance in declining turnover intentions among employees. It has been argued that when employees are committed to their occupation, they tend to spend more time developing their careers and develop lesser intention to leave their occupation. The emotional connection developed towards their career tends to overamplify the organisation regarding loyalty and emotional attachment, which ultimately benefits the organisation (Yousof et al., 2015).

### **2.3. *Work-Life Balance (WLB)***

WLB is defined as the amount of time spent on doing the job measured with time spent with family and personal time (Singh et al., 2020). A balanced life is where one spreads his or her efforts and energy between important agendas. WLB has become necessary in the current workplace, including in higher education or universities. Universities that encourage WLB attract and retain academics, which leads to increased productivity, job satisfaction and OC (Noor, 2011; Cho & Huang, 2012; Tan et al., 2019). It was reported that the disequilibrium between work and personal time might heighten stress and detrimental physical and mental health, subsequently affecting work performance and commitment to employee's occupation (Clark, 2000; Noor & Maad, 2008; Noor, 2011). Globalisation has paved the way for competition, and organisations have not given WLB much priority (Kim, 2006). In recent years, researchers have devoted a considerable amount of time trying to understand WLB because of the conflict it creates towards their personal time and mental stamina. The unequal segregation of WLB among employees deters them from devoting their time and effort to their occupation and, subsequently, to the organisation (Chaudhry, 2012; Hye, 2014). The role of the organisation, especially initiatives taken by human resource management, is important in identifying if there is a disequilibrium in the WLB due to its impact on work performance (Chaudhry, 2012).

In addition, the benefit of WLB among employees can also be seen in terms of less work-life conflict. It was argued that less work-life conflict would allow employees to be more committed to the organisation, more innovative and motivated to perform their job (Cegarra-Leiva, Sánchez-Vidal & Gabriel Cegarra-Navarro, 2012; Hye, 2014). Creating a SC can be challenging, and it has been suggested in previous findings that the implementation of WLB practices may not have a direct impact. However, WLB indirectly creates a SC where organisational performance can obtain positive outcomes (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012; Hye, 2014). It is important to note that managers

do not overinvest in mechanisms and tools for WLB practices but overlook methods required to facilitate this process or practice in shared culture, presumably SC (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012; Hye, 2014).

#### **2.4. Job Burnout**

Many researchers consider job burnout as the most important measure of occupational mental health (e.g.: Cole, Walter, Bedeian & O'Boyle, 2012; McKinley, Boland, & Mahan, 2017). According to Maslach (1982), the job burnout model comprises three components which are emotional exhaustion (mental and physical depletion), depersonalisation (hostility towards colleagues and customers), and condensed individual personal accomplishment (individuals' negative self-evaluation). Burnout is a concept that ranges from low to moderate to a high degree of experienced feeling (Maslach, 1982). A person who experiences high emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation coupled with a low level of personal accomplishment indicates a high degree of burnout.

On the other hand, a low level of emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation with a high degree of personal accomplishment indicates a low level of burnout. Job burnout has received considerable attention, and studies have found that burnout may lead to a decrease in job satisfaction, commitment, and productivity (Kim, 2006). As human service professionals, academics are exposed to various expectations concerning teaching overload, role conflicts, time pressures, and rigid university policies and procedures (Byrne et al., 2013). Furthermore, relationships with students and colleagues often involve high interpersonal and emotional demands, which can elevate the risk of burnout.

The effect of burnout is unquestionably argued due to its negative consequences on individual and organisational performance. The notable impact of job burnout can be reflected in an individual when there is a declining rate of individual performance, poor interpersonal relationships, increased levels of fatigue, and lack of OC (McKinley et al., 2017). Based on Byrne et al. (2013)'s findings among academics in Ireland measuring the three dimensions of burnout, the results showed that the personal accomplishment dimension contributed significantly high compared to emotional exhaustion and depersonalisation in terms of the negative feelings among academics. This particular dimension encapsulates employees' sense of achievement towards organisation and occupation. This finding indicated that having a high degree of burnout in this dimension profoundly impacts individual and organisational performance (Byrne et al., 2013; McKinley et al., 2017).

#### **2.5. Supportive Culture (SC)**

An SC that includes collaborativeness, teamwork and relationship-oriented (Yiing & Zaman, 2009) can cultivate group collectivism, instilling a feeling of pride, loyalty, and support from the organisation members (Messner, 2013). An SC, through work collaboration and teamwork can promote loyalty and a feeling of pride in promoting positive work behaviour among the employees (Yiing & Zaman, 2009; Messner, 2013). A culture that encourages competitiveness rather than teamwork profoundly impacts stress levels and WLB among employees, significantly decreasing work outcomes. Thus, organisations should gear towards promoting themselves to be more appealing to job seekers by creating an SC that can enhance their influence towards passion,

obsessive work passion and engagement towards their occupation and organisation (Burke, Astakhova, & Hang, 2015).

Recent studies have reflected recent development on how WLB practices in organisations profoundly impact enhancing a positive culture, thus impacting organisational performance and effectiveness. Employees perceive the presence of WLB practices in the organisation as a SC (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012; Burke et al., 2015), which will concurrently increase their OC and organisational performance. This reaffirms the social exchange theory (Blau, 2009) where an employee perceives positive support from the organisation and reciprocates with positive work behaviours. A SC received by employees from their peers, superiors and other departments plays a crucial role in employees' performance. One of the many benefits of SC is the ability to retain employees. Investment in facilitating mechanisms for SC can benefit the organisation in retaining talented employees because SC can create a mechanism to transfer knowledge and skills among employees, subsequently preventing burnout. It has been further stated that a SC can create a pivotal role in developing employees with a positive mind and attitude, which further contributes to organisation's performance (Kundu & Lata, 2017).

## **2.6. Hypotheses Development**

A supportive organisational culture is illustrated when a harmonious, teamwork and relationship-oriented structure is created (Yiing & Zaman, 2009). Previous studies have demonstrated the effect of SC on enhancing positive work behaviour (Lok & Crawford, 1999; Yiing & Zaman, 2009). However, there seems to be a minor track on investigating the effect of an individual's commitment to their occupation in creating a SC, which is signified in teamwork and being relationship-oriented. Employees with a strong identification and loyalty to their occupation are most likely able to enhance the relationship among their co-workers in their workplace and develop a sense of supportiveness in the organisation. This relationship amplifies a sense of teamwork and assists an employee's development in their occupation (Singh, Zhang, Wan & Fouad, 2018). This phenomenon might be true, especially with current competitive challenges when employees have to work under high-pressure situations such as academics, less work flexibility, and a high level of job burnout (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017). Based on the induced OC of an individual towards their occupation, they may most likely advocate a harmonious culture, open communication, trust and cohesion among employees, who are desirable attributes of supportive organisational culture (Pool, 2000; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2017; Singh et al., 2018). Hence, it can be postulated that:

*H1: There is a significant relationship between occupational commitment (OC) and supportive culture (SC).*

Past studies have suggested the importance of creating mechanisms to develop or facilitate SC in organisations to enable employees to transfer knowledge and skills among peers, subsequently reducing job burnout (Kundu & Lata, 2017; McKinley et al., 2017). SC is reflected in terms of creating harmony, teamwork, and relationships among employees, which can elevate organisational performance (Yiing & Zaman, 2009) and increase organisational commitment (Lok & Crawford, 1999; Silverthorne, 2003). It has been conceptualised that the importance of SC as a mode of intervention is to alleviate or prevent job burnout (Lingard & Francis, 2007). Thus, an organisation needs to facilitate a supportive cultural atmosphere in terms of teamwork and cooperation to encourage altruism among peers as a tool to minimise job burnout (Lingard &

Francis, 2007; Kundu & Lata, 2017; Cheng & Yi, 2018). Based on the discussion above, this study hypothesised that:

*H2: There is a significant relationship between supportive culture (SC) and job burnout.*

An organisation's SC, which is based on peer support, can elicit a positive response from employees, specifically if it minimises work-life conflict. SC can offer employees opportunities to balance work and non-work-related demands, thus enabling them to be more focused during work (Adisa et al., 2017). Human resources planning plays a crucial role in ensuring that practices and policies developed are perceived positively by employees as a mode of encouraging WLB and minimising work-life conflict. WLB practices implemented in the organisation need to be facilitated with SC to promote the employees to perform accordingly, which can be translated to positive organisational performance (Chaudhry, 2012; Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012; Reverte, Gómez-Melero & Cegarra-Navarro, 2016). It has been suggested that a supportive organisational culture serves as a complete mediator in facilitating WLB practices (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012; Reverte et al., 2016). Human resources must induce this supportive climate as a first step before expecting the results in terms of productivity to be gained by implementing WLB practices. Human resources or organisations may take a wrong turn or view in this by investing too many resources in WLB practices such as flexi-time or working from home rather than focusing on the appropriate tools to facilitate this process, such as organisational culture (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012; Adisa et al., 2017). However, to what extent can SC impact WLB in the academic setting? Thus, it can be hypothesised that:

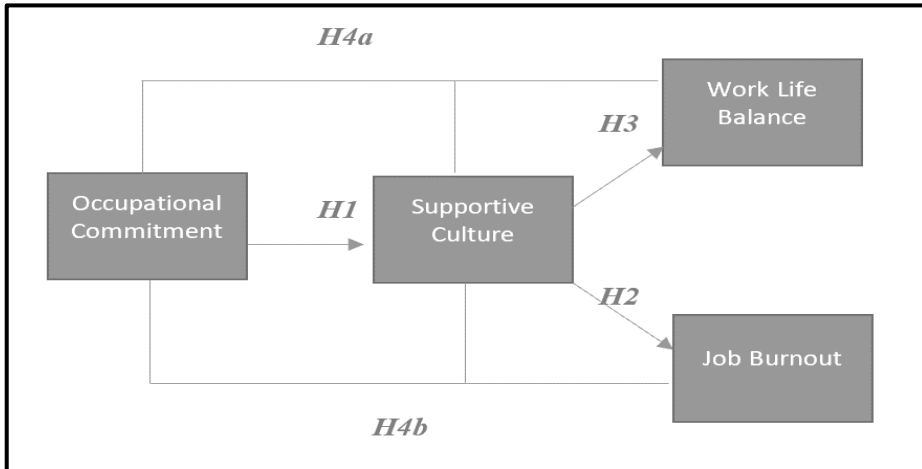
*H3: There is a significant relationship between supportive culture (SC) and work-life balance (WLB).*

In addition, many studies have supported the benefits of SC in provoking positive behaviour (Yiing & Zaman, 2009; Messner, 2013). Scholars have suggested that SC has a significant impact on minimising work-life conflict. Organisations with a culture predisposed towards openness, teamwork, and harmony are more likely to be perceived as supportive. The idea of being supportive is assumed when employees have teamwork and high levels of altruism in daily tasks, which minimises stress and work-life conflict (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012; Adisa, et al., 2017). A SC should allow employees to balance their personal time and work-life demands, thus alleviating organisational performance (Lingard & Francis, 2007; Kundu & Lata, 2017). Consequently, this research proposed that support organisations should enjoy a reduced level of job burnout and an improved level of WLB. Thus, the following hypothesis is developed:

*H4a: SC mediates the relationship between OC and WLB.*

*H4b: SC mediates the relationship between OC and job burnout.*

### **Figure 1: Research Model**



### **3. METHODOLOGY**

Three private universities in Klang Valley, Malaysia, were selected for this study. Klang Valley has been chosen for this study as this region has the highest number of universities in Malaysia (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2017). The selected private universities in the present study were determined based on the similarities in the programmes offered and the number of students. The researchers used stratified random sampling without targeting specific faculty as long as the participants are full-time academic staff members with similar workload attributes. A total of 600 questionnaires were distributed equally to the three universities in the study. One private university contributed most of the samples, which is 300 and the remaining two private universities contributed 107 samples. The selected universities offered similar programmes for undergraduates and postgraduates. The university which contributed most has a robust key performance index for academics for teaching and research. Four hundred and seven (407) usable questionnaires were returned with a response rate of 67.8 %.

#### **3.1. Research Instruments**

The emotional exhaustion measurement tool adopted for emotional exhaustion is from Maslach Burnout Inventory (Maslach, Jackson & Leiter, 1996), which has three segments covering emotional exhaustion, personal accomplishment, and depersonalisation. The WLB measurement was adapted from (Hayman, 2005), containing a total of 15 items that cover three dimensions, namely work interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW) and work/personal life enhancement (WLE).

The OC was assessed using the 12 items career commitment measurement by Carson and Bedeian (1994), which defines the individual motivation to work in a chosen profession or vocation. SC was assessed using Wallach (1983)'s instrument with items illustrating SC such as freedom, safe and trust. The items for organisational commitment were measured on questions adapted from Asgari et al. (2008), originally developed by Podsakoff and Mackenzie (1989). The items include



the five components of altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, civic virtue, and sportsmanship. Responses to all these items will be recorded on a five-point Likert scale with responses anchored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Background of the Respondents

The respondents' demographic details are provided in Table 1, where more than half of the respondents were between 25 and 34 years of age. 224 (55 %) respondents were female, and 297 (70%) of the respondents earned an income of between RM 4,000 and RM7,000. Only 11 (2.7%) of the respondents have teaching experience of less than one year. Malaysians accounted for most of the respondents (386 or 94.8%), while the rest were expatriates. 257 (63.1%) of the academics were Chinese. A total of 253 respondents (62.2%) were lecturers, while only four academics held Professorship (1.0%).

**Table 1:** Background of the Respondents

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		
Less than 25 years old	4	1
Between 25 and 34 years old	212	52
Between 35 and 44 years old	131	32
Between 45 and 54 years old	40	9.8
55 years old and above	20	4.9
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	183	45
Female	224	55
<b>Teaching Experience</b>		
Less than 1 year	11	2.7
1 - 3 years	112	27.5
4 - 6 years	104	25.6
7 - 9 years	96	23.6
10 years and above	84	20.6
<b>Teaching experience overseas</b>		
Yes	47	11.5
No	360	88.5
<b>Bachelors</b>		
Bachelors	37	9.1
<b>Masters</b>		
Masters	270	66.3
<b>PhD/DBA/D.Ed /D.Phil</b>		
PhD/DBA/D.Ed /D.Phil	96	23.6
<b>Professional</b>		
Professional	4	1
<b>Gross Monthly Salary</b>		
Less than RM 4000	70	17.2
Between RM 4000 and RM 7000	297	73

**Table 1:** continued

Between RM 7001 and RM 10000	31	7.6
Between RM 10,001 and RM 13,000	7	1.7
Above RM 13,001	2	0.5
<b>Nationality</b>		
Malaysian	386	94.8
Expatriate	21	5.2
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Malay	65	16
Chinese	257	63.1
Indian	63	15.5
Others	22	5.4
<b>Position</b>		
Assistant Lecturer	52	12.8
Lecturer	253	62.2
Senior Lecturer	18	4.4
Assistant Professor	71	17.4
Associate Professor	9	2.2
Professor	4	1
<b>Job Tenure</b>		
Permanent	355	87.2
Contract	52	12.8
<b>Administrative Job</b>		
Head of Department	20	4.9
Deputy Dean	11	2.7
Dean	4	1
None	372	91.4

#### **4.2. Assessment of Model**

The framework of this study was designed to provide empirical evidence on the relationship between OC and its effect on burnout and WLB with SC as the mediating factor. The Partial Least Square PLS-SEM (Structural Equation Modelling) method was employed to analyse data. The PLS is suitable because of its ability to handle both reflective and formative factors, has minimal restrictions on sample sizes and is appropriate as an exploratory approach (Lim, Cheah, Cham, Ting, & Memon, 2020). Research hypotheses were tested based on structural equation modelling using partial least squares techniques with SMART PLS 3.0. A two-stage approach was adopted, including measurement models (e.g. internal consistency reliability, convergent validity (CV) and discriminant validity (DV) and structural models (e.g. path coefficients, coefficient of determination and effect size) (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 2014).

#### **4.3. Measurement Model**

The assessment of the measurement model consists of internal consistency reliability, convergent validity and discriminate validity. Internal consistency reliability can be assessed through composite reliability (CR), which indicates whether the items used in the study are reliable

(McNeish, 2018). A CR value between 0.7 and 0.90 is considered to be satisfactory. However, values between 0.60 to 0.70 is also acceptable in exploratory research (Hair et al., 2010). In Table 2, the results of the measurement model indicate that all constructs used in this study have acceptable internal consistency reliability: OC (0.86), SC (0.909), WLB (0.879), and for the dimensions in burnout: depersonalisation (0.869), personal accomplishment (0.862) and emotional exhaustion (0.945). Convergent validity evaluates to what extent the measure correlates positively with alternative measures of the same construct (Hair et al., 2010). This can be measured with average variance extracted (AVE) (Avkiran, 2018). An AVE value of 0.5 or above is acceptable (Hair et al., 2014). An outer loading should be 0.708 or above to achieve a 50 per cent variance (0.5). The results in this study showed that all outer loadings were above the acceptable level (0.708) except for seven items: OccComm 58, SuppCulture 65, SuppCulture 67, WLB 41, WLB 42, WLB 47 and WLB 48 scored between  $-0.3$  and  $0.7$ . These items (with low loadings) were maintained because the other constructs were able to achieve satisfactory AVE scores 0.5 and above).

**Table 2: Internal Consistency Reliability and Convergent Validity**

<b>Construct</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Loading</b>	<b>AVE</b>	<b>CR</b>
<b>Occupational Commitment (OC)</b>	OccComm 49	0.838	0.609	0.86
	OccComm 50	0.855		
	OccComm 52	0.768		
	OccComm 58	0.648		
<b>Supportive Culture (SC)</b>	SuppCulture 61	0.723	0.557	0.909
	SuppCulture 62	0.717		
	SuppCulture 63	0.842		
	SuppCulture 64	0.777		
	SuppCulture 65	0.653		
	SuppCulture 66	0.805		
	SuppCulture 67	0.628		
	SuppCulture 68	0.799		
<b>Work-Life Balance (WLB)</b>	WLB 34	0.883	0.53	0.879
	WLB 35	0.890		
	WLB 36	0.869		
	WLB 37	0.835		
	WLB 38	0.807		
	WLB 39	0.716		
	WLB 40	0.781		
	WLB 41	0.603		
	WLB 42	0.571		
	WLB 47	-0.361		
	WLB 48	-0.463		
<b>Depersonalisation</b>	Dpersonali29	0.682	0.571	0.869
	Dpersonali30	0.778		
	Dpersonali31	0.809		
	Dpersonali32	0.733		
	Dpersonali33	0.771		

**Table 2:** continued

<b>Emotional Exhaustion</b>	EE12	0.862	0.656	0.945
	EE13	0.844		
	EE14	0.791		
	EE15	0.777		
	EE16	0.877		
	EE17	0.834		
	EE18	0.813		
	EE19	0.727		
	EE20	0.749		
<b>Personal Accomplishment</b>	PA22	0.709	0.556	0.862
	PA24	0.793		
	PA25	0.727		
	PA27	0.703		
	PA28	0.792		

Discriminant validity (DV) was assessed by means of HTMT, a recent approach in PLS-SEM literature for discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2010). DV refers to the extent to which a construct is truly distinct from other constructs by empirical standards. To achieve an acceptable and satisfactory level of DV, it is recommended to have an HTMT value of 0.90 (Hair et al., 2014). An HTMT value above 0.90 indicates a lack of DV and shows that constructs are conceptually similar. The results in Table 3 show that all constructs in this study (OC, SC, WLB, and burnout) are conceptually different. Table 3 presents the results of DV.

**Table 3:** Discriminant Validity: HTMT criterion

<b>Latent Constructs</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Depersonalisation						
Emotional Exhaustion	0.662					
Occupational Commitment	0.311	0.342				
Personal Accomplishment	0.477	0.605	0.618			
Supportive Culture	0.357	0.48	0.467	0.508		
Work-Life Balance	0.488	0.71	0.28	0.465	0.337	

#### **4.4. Structural Model**

Upon confirmation of measurement model, structural model was evaluated to empirically test the conceptual model consisting of five different theoretically-driven hypotheses. Several parameters, including coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ), path coefficient, effect size ( $f^2$ ), were estimated, as suggested by Hair et al. (2014).

According to Norušis (2000), the  $R^2$  for a cross-sectional survey is always low. Although the  $R^2$  value is relatively small for the current study, it is still significantly different from 0, indicating that the regression model has statistically significant explanatory power (Neter et al., 1996). Apart from that, the small number of IVs (e.g., only an IV for H2 and H3) in the present study further explained the low  $R^2$  value. Based on the above justifications, it can be surmised that the low  $R^2$  value is negligible due to the nature of the study and its capability to explain H2 and H3.

#### **4.5. Coefficient of Determination**

According to Hair et al. (2014),  $R^2$  value of 0.75, 0.50 and 0.25 are substantial, moderate and weak. In this study, OC explained 57.2% ( $R^2= 0.572$ ) variance in a SC, thus suggesting a weak to moderate level of predicting power of the model. Furthermore, SC and WLB ( $R^2=0.153$ ) and burnout ( $R^2=0.115$ ) indicated a weak level of prediction power of the model.

#### 4.6. Effect Size

Effect size ( $f^2$ ) measures a specific exogenous construct's substantive impact on the endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2014). The effect size can evaluate the effect size of the predictor constructs using Cohen's  $f^2$  (Cohen, 1988). According to Cohen (1988),  $f^2$  values of 0.35, 0.15 and 0.02 are considered large, medium and small effect sizes, respectively. In this study, SC has a medium effect size on burnout ( $f^2=0.304$ ), and OC has a small effect size on SC ( $f^2=0.181$ ), and SC has a small effect size on WLB ( $f^2=0.304$ ).

#### 4.7. Path Coefficient

From Table 4, the results of the study indicate that path coefficients suggest that OC has a strong impact on SC ( $t=8.518$ ). SC has an impact on WLB ( $t=7.112$ ) and burnout ( $t= 11.974$ ). The study suggests that H1, H2, and H3 are supported.

**Table 4:** Results of Hypotheses Testing (Direct Effects)

Direct Effects	$\beta$	SE	t-value	CI	$R^2$	$f^2$	Results
H1: OC-SC	0.391	0.046	8.518	0.300,0.479	0.572	0.181	Supported
H2:SC-WLB	-0.34	0.048	7.112	-0.442, - 0.259	0.153	0.13	Supported
H3:SC-Burnout	-0.48	0.04	11.974	-0.560, - 0.403	0.115	0.304	Supported

#### 4.8. Indirect Effect

The mediating effect of the proposed hypotheses was analysed using the indirect effect approach with bootstrapping method (5000 resamples) as recommended by (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). In Table 5, SC significantly mediates the relationship between OC and WLB ( $t= 5.603$ ) and SC substantially mediates the relationship between OC and burnout ( $t= 6.539$ ). Overall, the results suggest that H4a and H4b are supported.

**Table 5:** Results of Hypotheses Testing (Indirect Effects)

InDirect Effects	$\beta$	SE	t-value	CI	Results
H4a: OC-SC-WLB	-0.133	0.024	5.603	- 0.185, -0.096	Supported
H4b: OC-SC- Burnout	-0.189	0.029	6.539	-0.246, - 0.138	Supported

## 5. CONCLUSION

The study investigated the role of supportive culture on the relationship between OC, WLB, and job burnout among academics in private universities in Malaysia. First, the results from the study demonstrated that OC is positively related to SC. This result shows the potential relevance of OC in creating a culture that is conceptualised with harmony and teamwork. An elevated level of OC

is related to a strong attachment and identification with their respective occupations, which further enhances the relationship among co-workers, thus creating a sense of teamwork (Lok & Crawford, 1999; Yiing & Zaman, 2009; Agarwala et al., 2020). Second, SC is found to be positively related to job burnout. SC is reflected when there are teamwork and cooperativeness exist among organisation members. It can create a sense of collectivism, instilling a sense of pride among team members (Messner, 2013; Kundu & Lata, 2017; Cheng & Yi, 2018). Supportive culture minimises the effect of competitiveness and profoundly impacts stress levels, thus, reducing job burnout. Third, the study reveals that SC has a significant positive relationship with WLB. The results indicated that academics who perceive the availability of SC as a form of support for their well-being would have more positive attitudes towards the organisation (Kundu & Lata, 2017; Adisa et al., 2017). Lastly, the findings show that SC mediates the relationship between OC, job burnout, and WLB. The findings further suggest that the availability of SC sets the prior step for employees to form and develop their commitment toward the profession in which they have invested. The creation of SC may result in employees perceiving that their social well-being is prioritised, which explains the reduced job burnout and increases WLB (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012).

The research has made several contributions to the literature. Firstly, the researchers have made an effort to understand the implications of a supportive culture in an organisation. It was found that the performance of an organisation is closely associated with the effect of an SC. This study has further reaffirmed the notion of social exchange theory in which employees will have positive work performance when SC has been made available in an organisation (Burke et al., 2015). Secondly, this study has further reaffirmed that SC is also able to reduce job burnout and increase WLB. The reduction of job burnout and increased WLB are able to increase the effect of the positive performance of the organisation. This is supported by past literature where SC has been identified as a mechanism to retain talented employees because it can play a role in developing a good mindset among employees (Kundu & Lata, 2017).

The present study offers implications for management, specifically in private higher education institutions. OC is able to improve the quality and performance of an organisation, and it is important to focus on what should be done to facilitate employees' OC. This study offers useful implications for universities, as they provide further evidence of the beneficial effects of supporting culture to employees to survive in today's rapidly changing, competitive environment. The findings of this study provide new practical insights into the job performance of academics in private universities. The increased acceleration of change demanded in the academic setting, which is frequently changing, requires academics to focus on the occupation instead of the organisation. Most established academics stay in this industry for a very long time, and once they are established, they tend to place incredibly high commitment towards their occupation, specifically in the number of publications, collaboration, and grants received. Instead of focusing on organisational commitment, human resource policy makers in private university settings need to provide the necessary support to advance their commitment towards their occupation, which simultaneously benefits the organisation. For example, recognising employees' accomplishments, adapting work schedules to meet individual needs whenever possible, providing opportunities for professional development, enriching jobs and clarifying expectations are a few ways for universities to show their support among the employees.

The researchers recommend that further studies use the longitudinal method to understand the relationship between the abovementioned variables in the academic sector. It is also suggested that

other organisational factors can be considered independently or through mediating or moderator variables.

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