THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY AS A MEDIATOR IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE AND JOB PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Academic staffs are the main asset to Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) since education is the institution's core business. The ability of academic staff to meet the goals set by the HEIs is of utmost importance. They must possess strong competencies and excellent personality to improve their performance and achieve the desired target. Although the effect of organizational and individual factors has been verified in previous studies, it remains unclear what underlying mechanisms explain the relationship. This study examined the role of personality as a mediator in the relationship between leader-member exchange (LMX) and job performance. This research used a quantitative method with a total sample of 260 academic staff in private HEIs, which were analyzed using the SEM Amos software. The findings showed that LMX and job performance (β= -0.26) and LMX and personality (β= 0.42) were significantly related, and academic staff personality was found to have the most substantial effect on job performance (β= 1.07). The result also indicated that personality partially mediates the relationship between LMX and job performance. The study's findings propose that the management of HEIs can improve the organizational factors through the proper implementation of LMX, which will nurture individual factors' effectiveness and improve academic staff job performance.

Keywords: LMX, personality, job performance, academic staff

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, tertiary education in Malaysia has experienced enormous expansion, helping the country position itself as a potential regional hub for educational excellence. As an agent of

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environmental and economic change, tertiary education must be proactive in planning and controlling their activities as they have to be responsible and accountable to the stakeholders. The Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) of Malaysia also introduced strategic policies, quality assurance audits, rating systems, and ranking systems from external parties to ensure the quality of the education system. This tertiary education offers either homegrown degree programs or foreign degree qualifications, and many of these institutions have twinning degree arrangements with reputable foreign universities (Student Information and Guide, 2022). There are 20 public universities, 54 private universities, 10 foreign university branch campuses, 38 university colleges, and 332 private colleges (Laporan Pencapaian JPT, 2021). Public universities are categorized into either research, focused, or comprehensive universities. The government of Malaysia also grants autonomy status to public universities that meet the requirements. MOHE was introduced *Accelerated Programme for Excellence* (APEX) in 2008 to increase innovation and performance and encourage excellence among public universities (Universiti Sains Malaysia, n.d.).

Private HEIs do not receive funds from the government (Shariffuddin et al., 2017). These institutions rely on the tuition fees. There are four types of private universities. First, private HEIs offer both undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses. Second, university colleges offer pre-university and diploma programs. In addition, university colleges have the power to award degrees at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels that are held in the same regard as those awarded by the university. Third, the colleges which are offer diploma and pre-university programs. Some establishment colleges provide degree courses, including twinning programs included, through a local or foreign partner university. Fourth, the foreign university. Foreign universities in Malaysia are also considered private universities and work together with Malaysian institutions. Malaysian students who study in these private HEIs will get an international qualification without leaving the country (Student Information and Guide, 2022).

The MOHE has conducted various efforts to improve the status of Malaysian higher education institutions as a center of excellence in education internationally. Positive developments in the higher education sector in Malaysia have proven their role as a catalyst for the country's economic sector (Ministry of Higher Education, n.d.). To ensure that educational institutions can meet the increasing demands from the local and foreign markets, the performance and reputation of these institutions are very important. Besides having a system to control the quality of HEIs, the success of HEIs also primarily depends on academic staff performance, competency, commitment, and motivation to achieve the mission and goals of universities. The increasing industry rivalry and growing student numbers are pressuring academic staff to accept higher program delivery workloads without compromising teaching quality. The academic staff at HEIs also must conduct research and produce publications. According to Basarudin et al. (2016), academic staff workloads are divided into at least five categories in the setting of Malaysian institutions, including teaching and supervision, publication, research and consultation, management work, and community service.

Increasing the workload bought personal contentment simultaneously and generated stress among the academic staff. Academic staff unsatisfied with the jobs display low performance and less commitment and are at higher risk of leaving the occupation. Increased workload has been identified as a major source of stress, particularly when physical labour goes unnoticed (Chin, Wong & Rasdi, 2014). Other researchers observed that academic staff who report excessive workloads have difficulty performing problem-solving skills and personal motivation (Melin et al.,

2014). Furthermore, academic staff recognizes that their job satisfaction has decreased as their workload and pressure have increased (Massoudi et al., 2020), resulting in demotivation and poor work performance (Kenny, 2018). According to Dorenkamp, Isabelle and Ruhle (2019), academic staff has expressed concern over declining university career dedication due to increased demands and loads. Additionally, the study by Janib et al. (2021) shows that workload negatively affects academic performance in the research university. Such scenarios will affect the academic staff's satisfaction and performance and ultimately could leave the HEIs.

The high workload of teaching, research, publication, and the requirement to fulfil the organizational goal affects academic staff's personal traits. According to Suherman, Mulyasana and Sudrajat (2018) and, Jalaluddin, Munawar and Azwir (2021), personality affects how well higher education services are delivered and academic staff performs. The academic staff must have a good personality, which has implications for improving their performance to achieve the desired target. Academic staff must possess strong competencies and abilities to enhance their effectiveness and accomplish the intended outcome (Sameena, 2020; Yusaini & Utama, 2020). It raises questions about the antecedents that affect the academic staff's personality and job performance at universities. Numerous studies have also demonstrated that Leader Member-Exchange (LMX) can affect employees' job performance (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Biao & Chen, 2014; Mehmet & Faruk, 2018).

Previous studies have shown that the quality of LMX positively affects employee personality. For instance, a study by Kim and Koo (2017) and Volmer et al. (2012) shows that LMX contributes to employee innovative behavior development. According previous studies, personality qualities may significantly impact an employee's job performance (Cheng Liang & Mark, 2014; Spitzmuller et al., 2015; Kostiani & Galanakis, 2022). This study aimed to investigate the role of personality as a mediator in the relationship between LMX and job performance among academic staff in private HEIs. The significance of the study is to add value to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence on antecedents of job performance and the role of personality as a mediator in the relationship between both variables.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Campbell's Multi-Factor Model*

This study used Campbell's Multi-Factor Model. Cambell (1990) proposed a general job performance structure in eight dimensions. The eight factors are not of the same form. They have different patterns of sub-general factors, and their content varies differently across jobs. Furthermore, any particular job might not incorporate all eight components. Campbell (2012) revised Campbell et al. (1993) to represent a latent consensus structure that is described as concretely as possible. This model describes eight factors influencing employee performance. These eight factors are intended to be an integrative synthesis of what the literature has suggested as the principal content dimensions of performance in a work role. They encompass all the previous works on individual performance modeling, team member performance, and leadership and management performance. Technical performance includes technical tasks and interpersonal tasks when dealing with customer service. Employees are allowed to do their job, and this dimension is

strongly influenced by environmental factors surrounding it. It also includes communication, initiative, persistence, and employee effort. Other factors describe what leaders do (e.g., effective leader-member exchange, follower satisfaction, unit profitability) or the determinants (e.g., cognitive ability, personality) of leadership performance or the situational influences on leader performance. Furthermore, hierarchical management and team member leadership performance are part of the critical dimension in Campbell's Multi-Factor Model. In conclusion, Campbell's Multi-Factor Model is a very effective framework for establishing job performance, and this model was chosen for this study because it provides a flexible theoretical tool for conceptualizing key aspects of the work environment, explaining and predicting employee relationships and job performance in all work environments. An employee with high personality traits leads to positive interpersonal interactions and develops high-quality exchange, which results in further positive outcomes.

2.2. *Academic Staff Job Performance*

Employee performance is a result and an achievement according to the standards set by an organization to measure their level of performance as well as correct the mistakes made by employees (Pang & Ruch, 2019). Performance is the result or achievement of individuals and organizations in a predetermined plan relating to realizing an organization's goals, vision, mission, and objectives (Moeheriono, 2012; Hendri, 2019). Job performance is a multifaceted construct that includes in-role and extra-role performance (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2000; Kluemper, DeGroot & Choi, 2013).

An academic staff member is a person who can implement education and teaching, research and development, and community service. Academic staff performance will provide HEIs with valuable insights in which human abilities are required to implement strategies to achieve their objectives. Evaluating the academic staff's teaching performance is very important to enhance their commitment to promote more effective learning activities and experiences at the HEIs. Every university has specific criteria for measuring the performance of its academic staff members. In general, measuring academic staff performance in HEIs implicates an evaluation of teaching and learning, including supervision, research, publication, community services, and educational administration. According to Sharma et al. (2022), the advantage of employee performance evaluation is that it allows superiors to have a direct discussion with their employees, which can give them a better idea and build relationships. In Malaysia, the academic staff performance criteria are as follows: (1) teaching and learning scores; (2) administrative scores; (3) research grant scores; (4) publication and research scores; (5) supervisory scores; and (6) professional service scores (Guidelines to Good Practice Academic Staff, Malaysian Qualifications Agency, 2014). In teaching, an academic staff can prepare the relevant teaching materials and deliver them to students using the current technology. They must have the qualifications that are appropriate to their level of education as any action of the academic staff usually becomes a mirror of students' attitudes. According to Hakim, Wardhani and Fernandes (2017), an academic staff ideally has the following criteria: a) intellectually productive; b) ability and background knowledge; c) good attitude; and ability to communicate and act as an educator and a teacher for learners. Additionally, an academic staff becomes the role model for the students.

There are three criteria to be an excellent academic staff at a university (Su & Wood, 2012). First, a good academic staff at the university reflect on what they do to develop a greater awareness of themselves and their students. Second, an academic staff is involved with the students in their dialogue, motivated by a desire to know and understand them and their practice better. Third, good academic staff at the university are expected to be highly qualified for the position and have the specialized knowledge in the subject area they teach and all the necessary skills to pass this knowledge to students. According to Said, Alfred and Tandi Lwoga (2014), the research activities are measured by the number of publications by an academic staff or a group of academic staff at a specific time. Similarly, other researchers also argue that publications and other research outcomes often determine research performance. The publication can be made in various ways, such as conference papers (known as proceedings), journal articles, books, book chapters, research project reports, articles in the newspaper and magazine, and monographs (Seyyed, Umar & Al-Hajji, 2004; Bieschke, 2006; Mawoli & Babandako, 2011). According to Rahman (2020), another obligation of academic staff is to conduct research and community service, so performance in carrying out their duties also needs to be evaluated.

2.3. *Leader-Member Exchange*

LMX theory offers several frameworks for understanding the development of leader-follower relationships: the Role Making Model (Graen & Scandura, 1987) and the Leadership Making Model (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The initial framework by Graen and Scandura (1987) served as a theoretical base for the Leadership Making Model (Graen &Uhl-Bien, 1995), which outlines three stages of development, namely, the "stranger stage", the "acquaintance stage" and the "maturity stage." The stranger stage parallels the "role-specification" stage of the funding model. It involves the initial segment of the relationship when the leader and member assume independent roles and job requirements dictate the nature of the exchange. The progress to the second stage depends on the acceptance and reciprocation of particular career-centred social exchange offered by either dyad member. The acquaintance stage (role-making) occurs when the mutual exchange of resources within the dyad defines the nature of the relationship. Lastly, the mature relationship stage (role routinization) involves highly developed interactions between the leader and the member. At this stage, the leader and member are more interdependent, and it is proposed that this stage of development corresponds to a high-quality LMX relationship (Martin et al., 2010).

According to the LMX theory, leaders are expected to allocate limited positional and personal resources or time to followers in various methods to establish goals (Qu, Janssen & Shi, 2017). The core feature of leader-member relationships is that role expectations are frequently negotiated and accompanied by active social exchanges between supervisors and subordinates (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). In line with the previous study, supervisors and subordinates with high-quality LMX are more likely to pursue perceptual congruence in-role behaviour and may seek to broaden the scope of subordinate formal work-related roles (Hsiung, Hsin-Hua & Tsai, 2009; Qu, Janssen & Shi, 2017). LMX is an activity that pays more attention to the quality of the relationship between subordinates and supervisors in the workplace.).High-quality LMXs improve the attitudes and behaviours of managers and their subordinates. Therefore, LMX theory was chosen for this study because it can foster a positive work attitude and behaviour among employees and increase their work performance. It also focuses on the quality of the interchange between employees and their superiors.

2.4. Big Five Personality

A positive personality can produce employees with positive values involving emotional, cognitive, and behavioural values and thus contributes to the effectiveness of work performance. Feist and Feist (2006) suggested that personality is a relatively permanent pattern of nature, character, and personality that gives consistency in behaviour. Thus, a personality is a dynamic organization in a unique individual, relatively settled in the internal and external aspects of a person's character that affects behaviour in different situations. Although it is impossible to determine work behaviour from the effect of personality alone, because of the importance of situational variables such as colleagues, supervision, job environments and reward structure, personality variables can be significant predictors of work performance when they are carefully matched with appropriate occupations and organizations (Robertson, Ivan & Callinan, 1998).

The Big Five Personality Model was introduced by Lewis R. Goldberg in 1981 and developed by Allport, a famous psychological philosopher who researched the lexical hypothesis. The personality process in the Big Five Model was developed through the personality theory of Eysenck and Cattel, whereby these people have the same characteristics regarding personality traits. This model explains personality using five broader dimensions consisting of a group of personality traits. From the psychological aspect, the Five-Key Personality features are five common factors or dimensions of personality traits found through empirical studies. The first feature is extraversion which is energetic, active, curious, self-esteem, sociable, wanting to be with others, speaking, expressing ideas, and wanting something confident, optimistic, and positive about something (McCrae, Robert & Costa, 1999). The second feature is neuroticism. This feature contradicts emotional stability, such as unreasonable behaviour, worrying about something, nervousness, easy-to-lose patience, irritability, depression, and anxiety. The third characteristic of character is the consent of comfort and ease of love, showing respect and courtesy, and having a good, flexible, trustworthy, cooperative, forgiving, tolerant, and kind personality (Zhang, 2003). The fourth personality feature is honest openness, can think about something, has the idea of imagination, listening and accepting thoughts, no cover and frankness, curiosity, original ideas, and broad-minded and artistic sensitivity (Barrick & Ryan, 2003). The fifth characteristic of personality is the firmness of the firm and firm with his idea. Hence, motivated behaviour to realize a clear and tangible objective. It includes working with caution, complete, thorough, detailed, responsible, and knowledgeable. This personality feature is usually associated with educational achievement and motivation (Barrick & Ryan, 2003). Therefore, in this study, the Big Five Personality is chosen because past studies have suggested that personality traits might predict and play an important role in an employee's job performance (Cheng-Liang & Mark, 2014; Tisu et al., 2020) because it can create an organizational citizenship behaviour an (e.g. Spitzmuller et al., 2015)

2.5. The Relationship between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Job Performance

A possible reason is that high LMX relationships demonstrated positive outcomes for followers and their leaders in establishing high-quality working relationships. As a result, Erdogan and Enders (2007) thought that employees with high-quality LMX relationships tend to pay back with high work performance to keep a balance or fair social exchange. In addition, good interaction between superiors and subordinates will also provide good quality job satisfaction. When superiors can communicate well with subordinates, they will feel that their superiors give full impetus to subordinates. This will increase self-confidence in subordinates and motivate them to do the job as

expected even more. Recent evidence from academics and scholars suggests that the quality of LMX is closely correlated with positive employee attitudes, actions, and creativity (Schuh et al., 2018; Kalyar, Usta, & Shafique, 2020; He, Morrison & Zhang, 2021). A recent meta-analysis by Martin et al. (2016) shows a positive relationship between LMX and follower task performance. Choy, McCormack and Djurkovic (2016) and Sa'adah and Rijanti (2022) indicate a positive relationship between high-quality LMX and job performance. LMX has an impact on staff productivity, according to studies by Handayani and Purwanto (2018) and Agow and Dotulong (2020). In another study, LMX is positively associated with different dimensions of employee performance, including task performance and organizational citizenship behaviour (Ilies, Nahrgang and Morgeson, 2007; Martin et al., 2016). Recent studies also indicated that considering leadership factors can provide a comprehensive understanding of how leaders influence employee creative behaviour (Farrukh, Meng & Raza, 2021). Based on the discussion, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: LMX is significantly related to job performance.

2.6.   The Relationship between Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Personality

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) proposed that subordinates who met the role expectations of supervisors were more likely to have high-quality leader-member relationships. According to Lebowitz (2016), leaders who understand how individuals' personalities differ can use this understanding to develop their leadership effectiveness and improve employees' job performance. It also helps the workers perform well and motivates them to remain in the institution (Srivastava & Agarwal, 2012). For instance, a study by Volmer et al., (2012) and Kim and Koo (2017) shows that LMX contributes to employee engagement and innovative behaviour development. One factor that determines employees' interest in their work is their relationship with their manager (Van Dyne, Kamdar & Joireman, 2008). High-quality Leader-member exchange involves high levels of interpersonal trust, which carry the relationship beyond the formal employment contract (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). A strong employee-leader exchange can also positively influence employees' motivation. Employees with good relationships with their leaders are more likely to feel motivated to perform well and achieve their goals. This motivation can translate into personality traits such as self-confidence, initiative, and a proactive approach to work. In another study, Runhaar, Konermann and Sanders (2013) suggested that to encourage teachers to exert extra effort to ensure school success, principals should establish high-quality exchange relationships with teachers. Teachers who enjoy a high-quality exchange relationship may show a good personality (i.e., believing that their principals are more likely to accept mistakes as learning experiences, encouraging them to try things beyond their required tasks) (Sekiguchi, 2010). In addition, the literature has found a link between LMX and other positive personalities, such as being proactive (Bhal & Ansari, 2007; Van Dyne et al., 2008; Sekiguchi, 2010; Zhang, Li & Harris, 2015) and promoting employee creativity (Carnevale et al., 2017). On the other hand, leaders can build relationships with the members of their workgroups at varying intensities, according to Lee (2020). Thus, authors predict that LMX is significantly linked to personality:

Hypothesis 2: LMX is significantly related to the big five personality.

2.7.   The Relationship between Personality and Job Performance

The effect level of personality on job performance is different between individuals. It is because each individual has a different personality, which may explain why job performance differs across different types of people with a certain personality (Motowidlo, Borman & Schmit, 2014). Poropat (2009) argued that individuals with greater conscientiousness are more involved in the job and perform job tasks better than less conscientious individuals. At HEIs, academic staff must have a good personality, which improves their performance to achieve the desired target. Academic staff also must possess good competencies and abilities to accomplish the intended outcome (Sameena, 2020; Yusaini & Utama, 2020). They must be competent and professional in carrying out their duties and obligations to fulfill their roles and positions (Asim & Kumar, 2018; Papanthymou & Darra, 2018). Past studies have suggested that personality traits might predict and play an important role in an employee's job performance (Raja, John & Bilgrami, 2011; Cheng-Liang & Mark, 2014). Olukemi, Sawyer, Shanti and Wang (2009) focus their research on examining the relationship between personality factors and performance using service performance indicators. Results using structural equation modeling showed that, except extraversion or introversion, all of the personality dimensions of the five-factor model (conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to new experience, and emotional stability) and the locus of control were significantly related to one or more of the performance measures. Nailah, Suzan and Wafa (2017) examined the role of personality traits in determining performance. The study found that conscientiousness, openness, and emotional stability directly affect performance. Another study by Aremu, Olaonipekun and Mu'azu (2018) showed that openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism significantly related to group performance. Another study by Gupta and Gupta (2020) revealed that managers' personality traits affect their work-related performance in the firm. Thus, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 3: Big five personality is significantly related to job performance.

2.8.   Personality as Mediator in the Relationship between LMX and Job Performance

Previous studies have verified the role of personality as a mediator. For instance, Imam, Abbasi and Muneer (2013) found that personality X and Y significantly mediate the relationship between Islamic work ethics and employee performance. Komarraju, Karau and Schmeck (2009) also found that conscientiousness emerged as a partial mediator of the relationship between intrinsic motivation to accomplish and the student's Grade point average (GPA). Another study by Clarke, Koch and Hill (2004) indicated that neuroticism is a mediator in the relationship between locus of control and depression. Finally, Lee, Ashton and de Vries (2005) investigated the relationships between trait procrastination and two Big Five personality factors, neuroticism and conscientiousness. Results from structural equation modeling analyses favoured a model with conscientiousness as a mediator over a model with procrastination as a mediator. The conscientiousness mediator model accounted for 24 percent of the variance in trait procrastination. Based on previous findings, there is a potential for personality to play the role of a mediator in the relationship between LMX and job performance. Thus, the authors propose the final hypothesis as the following:

Hypothesis 4: Big five personality mediates the relationship between LMX and job performance

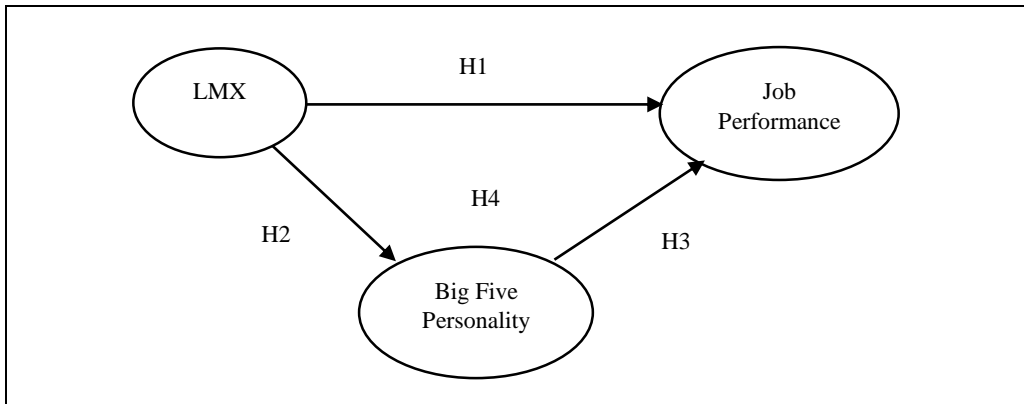**Figure 1**: The Proposed Conceptual Model
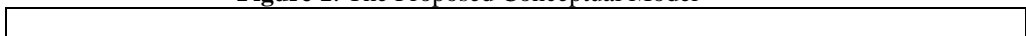
Figure 1 summarizes all the predicted relationships and depicts the proposed conceptual model with the big five personality as a mediator. The following sections explain the study's research design, measures of tested constructs, and results of hypothesis testing.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. *Sample and Procedures*

The study was conducted at selected Islamic University Colleges in Malaysia, and the data were collected from 260 full-time academic staff. These Islamic University Colleges are located in Selangor, Melaka, and Perlis. The study samples were selected from a cluster of university colleges that gained Tier 3 and Tier 4 in the Rating System for Malaysian Higher Education (SETARA) 2019. This study applied probability sampling designs. In specific, this study used stratified sampling technique. Stratified sampling technique is able to minimize the sampling errors. The stratified sampling technique also allows homogeneity within the stratum and heterogeneity across groups (Sekaran & Bougie 2016; Creswell & Creswell 2018). The questionnaire of this study was administrated using an online survey to the participants. The pilot study also was conducted to improve the questionnaire design and to test the validity and reliability measurement model.

3.2. *Measures*

A survey was used as the tool for data collection. The questionnaire was contained these parts; one was to collect demographical information and the other two parts were to collect data for variables under investigation. Job performance was measured by 22- the scale of the items. There are three dimensions in measuring the academic staff job performance: teaching, research, and publication performance, using the 5-point Likert scale. The leader-member exchange was measured using the 7-item scale. Twenty-two (22) items measured the personality of the academic staff, and the survey respondents indicated a range from one to seven point Likert scale. The details of the instrument of the study were as follows:

Table 1: Instrument Details

Variable	No.of item	Adapted From	Sample Item	Reliability
JP (Teaching)	10 items		I mark all the assignments given to students.	
JP (Research)	8 items	Mawoli and Babandako (2011), and Abdulsalam and Mawoli (2012).	I attend at least one national conference per annum.	0.80
JP (Publication)	4 items		I have contributed chapters to the book of readings	
LMX	7 items	Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), and Altinay, Dai Chang, Lee, Zhuang and Liu (2019)	My manager understands my problems and needs.	0.93
PS (Conscientiousness)	5 items		I am always prepared	
PS (Extraversion)	4 items	Sawyer, Srinivas and Wang (2009), and Golberg (1999)	I feel comfortable around people	0.87
PS (Agreeableness)	4 items		I feel others' emotions	
PS (Neuroticism)	4 items		I readily overcome setbacks	
PS (Openness)	4 items		I have excellent ideas.	

Note: JP= Job Performance; LMX=Leader-member Exchange; PS = Personality

3.3. *Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) for Measurement Model*

This study used Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to investigate the influences of LMX and academic staff's personalities on their job performance. It is noted that SEM aims to estimate the model's parameters (factor loadings, factor variance, and covariance, and observe variable and residual errors). The employment of SEM can identify the interdependence and causality relationship between the unobserved variables as latent variables. Indeed, SEM is an essential analytical approach in management research (Williams, Vandenberg & Edwards, 2009).

The reliability and internal consistency of the items constituting each construct were estimated. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the extent to which the observed data fit the pre-specified theoretically driven model. Absolute and incremental fit indices were used to establish whether, overall, the model is acceptable, and if acceptable, they establish whether specific paths are significant. The internal and external validity of each item was tested in this study. First, the factor loading less than 0.5 was deleted to perform the internal validity test. Second, first-order confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to test those values of $\chi2/df$, GFI, AGFI, and RMSEA by deleting those items with the highest residual values. If those values

reach the threshold suggested, those items will remain (Hair, Black, Babin & Anderson, 2019). After the measurement model was validated, the next step was to test the validity of the structural model and its corresponding hypothesized relationship.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Respondent's Profile

Table 2: Demographic Profile

| Characteristics		Percentage
Gender	Male	40.8
	Female	59.2
Age	21 – 30 Years	9.2
	31 – 40 Years	45.4
	41 – 50 Years	38.1
	Over 50 Years	7.3
Marital Status	Married	80.8
	Single	16.9
	Divorced	2.3
Level of Education	Bachelor's Degree	10.4
	Master's Degree	66.9
	Ph.D. or Equivalent	22.7
Job Position	Junior Lecturer	13.1
	Lecturer/ Tutor	66.2
	Senior Lecturer	19.6
	Associate Professor	1.2
	Professor	0.0
Length of Services (In the current institution)	Less than 5 years	23.1
	5 to 10 years	30.4
	11 to 15 years	26.2
	Over 15 years	20.4

Table 1 displays a detailed report on the sample profiles. The key demographic questions in the survey included gender, age, marital status, level of education, job position, and length of services in the current institution. The descriptive data of the final sample indicated that 59.2% of participants were females and 40.8% were males. Regarding the age group, 45.4 % of respondents were between 31-40 years, followed by the age group between 41-50 years, accounting for 38.1% of the total sample. Also, the age group between 21-30 years represented 9.2% of the sample, and the age group over 50 represented 7.3%. Again, married people occupied the most significant number regarding marital status, representing 80.8%. In comparison, single accounted for 16.9%, and divorced shared the lowest number of responses, representing 2.3%. Furthermore, most respondents were master's degree holders, which constitutes 66.9% of respondents, followed by qualification of PhD or equivalent, 22.7% of the total respondent. Also, qualifications from degrees

represent 10.4% of the sample. The job position category is also considered a demographic characteristic, with lecturers scoring 66.2%. In contrast, the senior lecturer was 19.6%, and the junior lecturer represented 13.1% of the total participants. In the last position, the associate professor, only 1.2% of persons responded, and there was no response from the professor. Finally, regarding the institution's service length, most respondents (30.4%) had a length of service between 5 to 10 years. In contrast, in the 11-15 years representing 26.2%, another 23.1% were less than 5 years category. At the same time, minority of the respondents have more than five years of service, representing 20.4%.

4.2. *Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Result*

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to assess the extent to which the observed data fit the pre-specified theoretically driven model. CFA is a technique usually employed to confirm an a priori hypothesis about the relationship between a set of measurement items and their respective factors. The following section discusses CFA results for the academic staff's job performance, LMX, and big five personality.

Figure 2: Model Fits for Academic Staff's Job Performance (CFA)
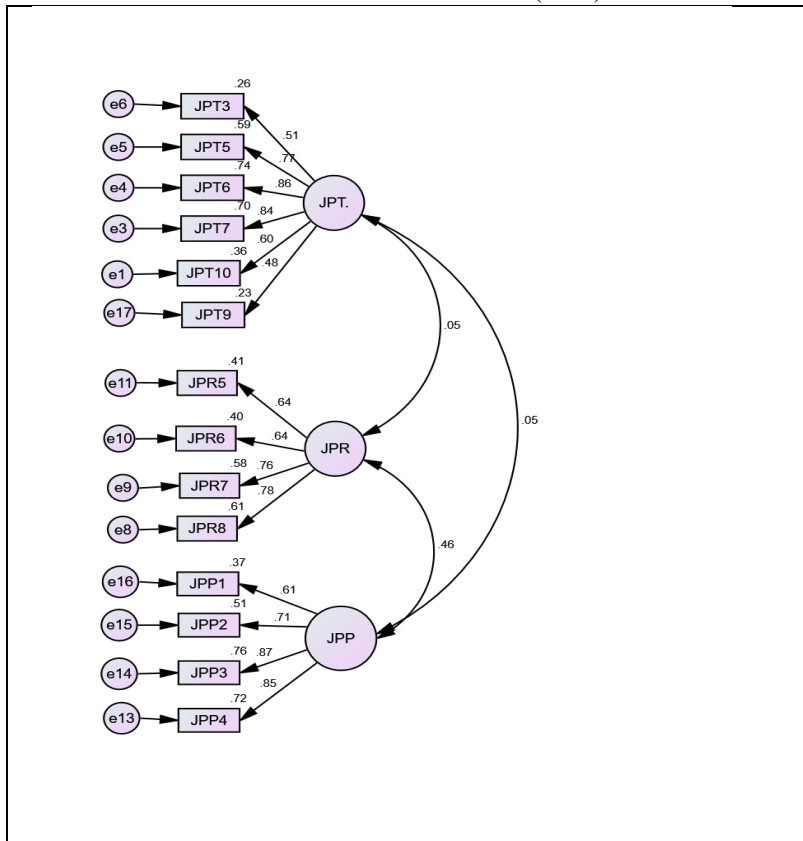
$\chi 2 /df = 3.98$; GFI: 0.90; CFI=0.90 and RMSEA= 0.10
Note: JPT= Job Performance- Teaching; JPR= Job Performance- Research;

JPP= Job Performance -Publication

Figure 2 shows the fit indices summary provided by the CFA output for job performance after deleting two items, JPT2, which was redundant, and JPR3 which was low factor loading. The Chi-square value was 3.98.   The p-value associated with this result was significant at *p*= 0.00. In addition to the χ2 result, the value of CFI, an incremental fit index, was 0.90, which is above the 0.90 thresholds recommended by Hair et al. (2019), hence acceptable, while the values for absolute fit indices were 0.90 for goodness-of-fit (GFI), which is at the required 0.90 thresholds (Bagozzi, Yi and Nassen 1998), hence acceptable and 0.10 for RMSEA. Hu and Bentler (1999) and Brown and Cudeck (1993) suggest that values as high as 0.10 are deemed acceptable. All the fit indices suggest a good fit between the model and the data. These results suggest that the academic staff job performance measurement model is a good fit.

Figure 3: Model Fits for LMX
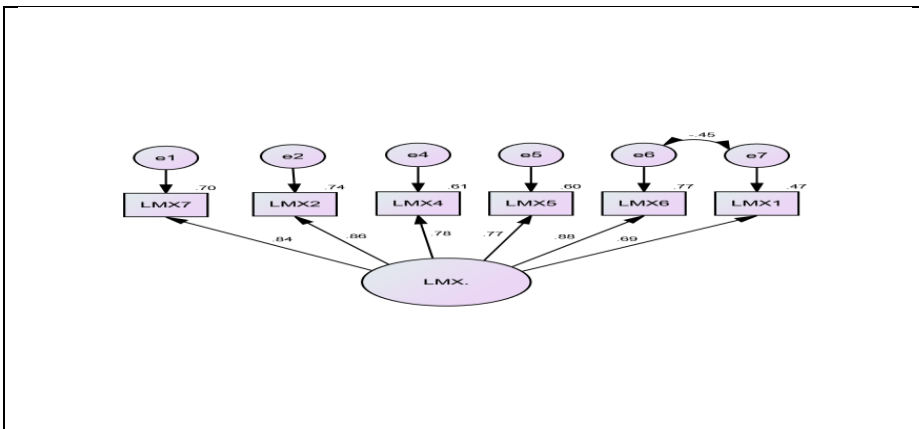

χ2 /df = 5.0; GFI: 0.95; CFI=0.96 and RMSEA= 0.10

Figure 2 shows that the LMX construct was initially measured using seven items (LMX1, LMX2, LMX3, LMX4, LMX5, LMX6, LMX7). The CFA indicated that all items show acceptable factor loading, which is above 0.50. However, one item, which is LMX3 has been deleted from the drawing due to showing unacceptable factor loading (below 0.50). In addition, a covariate has been create between LMX1 and LMX6 because the value of modification indices showing that these two items are inter-related. As a result, the fitness indexes were sufficient and within the recommended level (χ2 /df = 5.0, GFI= 0.95, CFI=0.96 and RMSEA 0.10.).

Figure 4: Model Fits for Academic Staff Big Five Personality
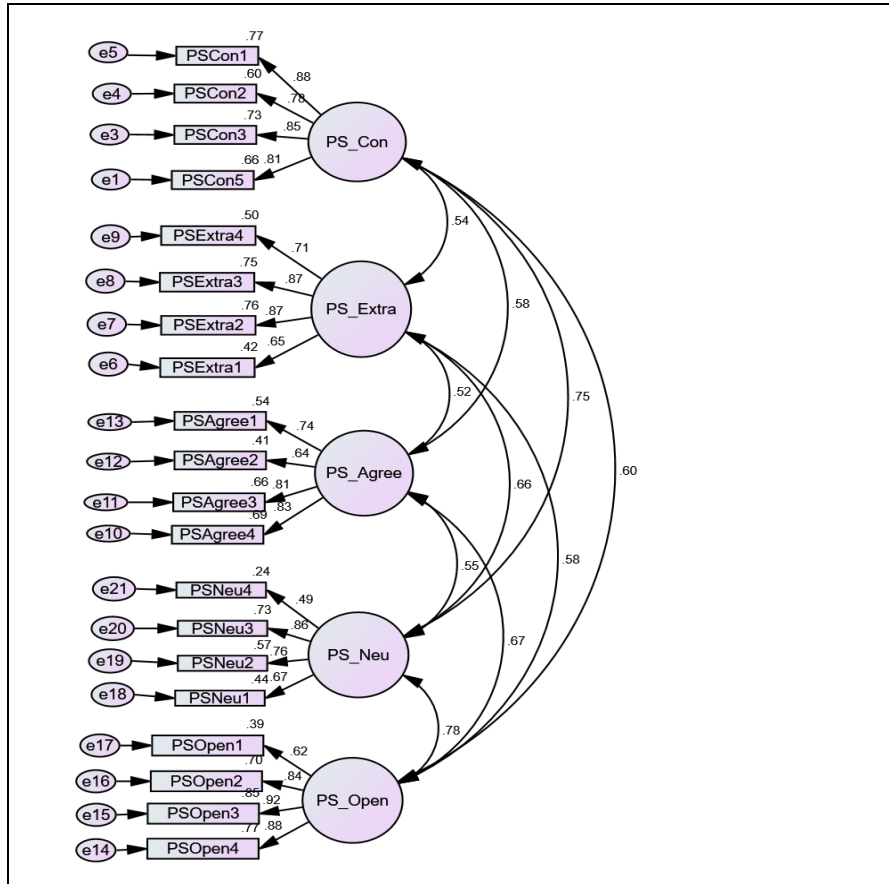
χ2 /df = 2.69; GFI=0.90; CFI=0.92; and RMSEA= 0.08
Note: PSCons = Personality-Conscientiousness ; PSExtra= Personality -Extraversion; PSAgree= Personality-Agreebleness ; PSNeuro= Personality-Neuroticism; PSOpen= Personality-Openness

Figure 4 shows the fit indices summary provided by the CFA output. The Chi-square value was 2.69. The *p*-value associated with this result was significant at *p*= 0.00. In addition to the χ2 result, the value of CFI, an incremental fit index, was 0.92, which is above the 0.90 thresholds recommended by Hair et al. (2019), hence acceptable, while the values for absolute fit indices were 0.90 for goodness-of-fit (GFI), which is at the required 0.90 thresholds (Bagozzi, Yi and Nassen, 1998) hence acceptable and 0.08 for RMSEA, which is a value below 0.08 hence acceptable (Hair et al., 2019). These results suggest that the measurement model for the personality of the academic staff provides a reasonably good fit.

Once the CFA procedure for every construct is completed, the validity and reliability assessment is required before modeling the measurement model. At this stage, the validity of the construct was evaluated through convergent validity. Convergent validity assumes that the set of indicators or items uniquely represents the underlying construct. It can be assessed by computing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), developed by (Fornell and Larker, 1981).

Table 3: Factor Loading, Average Variance Expected and Construct Reliability of Job Performance

Component	Item	Factor Loading	AVE ($\geq$ 0.5)	C.R. ($\geq$ 0.6)
JPT	JPT3	0.50	0.52	0.87
	JPT5	0.76		
	JPT6	0.86		
	JPT7	0.83		
	JPT9	0.48		
	JPT10	0.60		
JPR	JPR5	0.64	0.50	0.80
	JPR6	0.63		
	JPR7	0.76		
	JPR8	0.78		
JPP	JPP1	0.60	0.59	0.85
	JPP2	0.71		
	JPP3	0.87		
	JPP4	0.85		

Table 4: Factor Loading, Average Variance Expected and Construct Reliability of LMX

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	AVE ($\geq$ 0.5)	CR ($\geq$ 0.6)
LMX	LMX1	.68		
	LMX2	.86		
	LMX4	.78	0.65	0.92
	LMX5	.77		
	LMX6	.87		
	LMX7	.83		

Table 5: Factor Loading, Average Variance Expected and Construct Reliability of Personality

Component	Item	Factor Loading	AVE ($\geq$ 0.5)	C.R. ($\geq$ 0.6)
PS-Con	PSCon1	.87		
	PSCon2	.77	0.69	0.89
	PSCon3	.85		
	PSCon5	.81		
PS-Extra	PSExtra1	.65		
	PSExtra2	.87	0.61	0.86
	PSExtra3	.86		

	PSExtra4	.71		
PS-Agree	PSAgree1	.73		
	PSAgree2	.64	0.58	0.84
	PSAgree3	.81		
	PSAgree4	.83		
PS-Neu	PSNeu1	.66		
	PSNeu2	.75	0.50	0.79
	PSNeu3	.85		
	PSNeu4	.49		
PS-Open	PSOpen1	.88		
	PSOpen2	.91	0.68	0.89
	PSOpen3	.84		
	PSOpen4	.62		

Tables 3, 4, and 5, the result of AVE presented in the above table clearly show that the convergent validity for single constructs has been achieved as all the constructs exceeded the suggested level of 0.50. The analysis showed that the AVE ranged from 0.50 to 0.69. Values for AVE greater than 0.50 would mean that more than half of the variances observed in the items were explained by underlying constructs. It confirmed that all items measure only a single construct. While validity concerns whether a set of items converges on the same concepts, reliability, on the other hand, refers to how individual items are consistent in their measurements (Hair et al., 2019)). Composite Reliability (CR.) values for all constructs vary from 0.79 to 0.92, with values greater than 0.60. This result suggests that the instruments used to measure the latent construct are reliable and consistently represent the same latent construct. At this point, it can be concluded that the constructs in the model reflect convergent validity and construct reliability.

4.3.   Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model represents the second stage in SEM analysis after the first stage of the CFA single construct. In this model, all latent constructs involved in the study should be assessed together without assignment to exogenous or endogenous. At this stage, the assessment of the measurement model was made into two categories: (1) to test for model fit; (2) to test discriminant validity. The initial measurement model incorporated five job performance constructs and five personality constructs. All these latent constructs are placed at one level and analyzed in simultaneous analysis to determine the extent to which it is consistent with the data. If the goodness of fit is adequate and fulfills the discriminant validity requirement, it can proceed to the next stage (structural model) to test the hypotheses. Table 6 below reports selective fit indices for the proposed model.

Table 6: The Fitness Index for Measurement Model

Name of Category	Name of Index	Index Value	Comments
Absolute fit	RMSEA	0.08	The required level achieved
Incremental fit	CFI	0.92	The required level achieved
Parsimonious fit	Relative χ^2 (CMIN/df)	3.03	The required level achieved

Table 6 shows that the structural model's overall goodness of fit was evaluated using the same set of fit indices explained earlier to evaluate the measurement model. The CFA showed that this structural model fits the data adequately with the value $\chi2/df = 3.03$, CFI=0.92, and RMSEA= 0.08. $\chi2/df$ is smaller than 5.0, and CFI achieved the required fitness level. All the fit indices suggest a good fit between the model and the data, and no modification was attempted. After the fitness of the measurement model was completed, this study computed the validity and reliability of the construct and summarized it in Table 7.

Table 7: The Composite Reliability(CR) and AVE for All Contracts

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	AVE (≥ 0.5)	C.R (≥ 0.6)
JP	JPT	0.18	0.52	0.87
	JPR	0.66		
	JPP	0.62		
LMX	LMX1	0.68	0.65	0.92
	LMX2	0.86		
	LMX4	0.78		
	LMX5	0.77		
	LMX6	0.87		
	LMX7	0.83		
PS	PS-Con_L	0.73	0.53	0.85
	PS-Extra	0.72		
	PS-Agree	0.62		
	PS-Open	0.77		
	PS-Neu	0.80		

Table 7 shows the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and the Composite Reliability (CR) value for all model constructs. The analysis showed that the AVE ranged between 0.52 to 0.65. It means all constructs meet the requirement for convergent validity. In addition, the CR values for all constructs varied from 0.85 to 0.92. It means all constructs have a good reliability value.

In the last steps of the Measurement Model, the study assessed the discriminant validity of constructs to clarify that they are not redundant to each other. The discriminant validity for the construct is achieved if the model's independent variable's correlation does not exceed 0.85 (Fornel & Larker, 1981; Awang, Lim & Zainuddin, 2018). The study also developed the Discriminant Validity Index summary for all constructs involved in the model to ensure that they discriminate from each other. The AVE values (in bold) are shown in the Discriminant Validity Index Summary Table 8:

Table 8: The Discriminant Validity Index Summary

Construct	JP	LMX	PS
JP	**.51**		
LMX	.013	**.64**	

PS	.392***	.406***	**0.54**

Overall the discussion in this section provides evidence to support the validity and reliability of the measurement model. The final measurement model fits relatively well and meets the requirements of several fit indices. Subsequently, it is now opportune to examine the structural model to test the hypotheses of this study.

4.4.   *Structural Equation Model*

A structural model has been defined by Hair et al. (2019) as a transition of the measurement model to a structural model that is strictly based on a theory with a set of structural equations. In other words, the hypothesized relationships will be empirically investigated by assigning which constructs (variables) are believed to be critical factors that influence the endogenous construct (variable). Following the measurement model validity confirmation, the structural model is specified by assigning relationships from one construct to another based on the conceptual framework. Figure 5 shows the structural equation model:

Figure 5: SEM Model for the Relationship between LMX, Big Five Personality, and Job Performance.
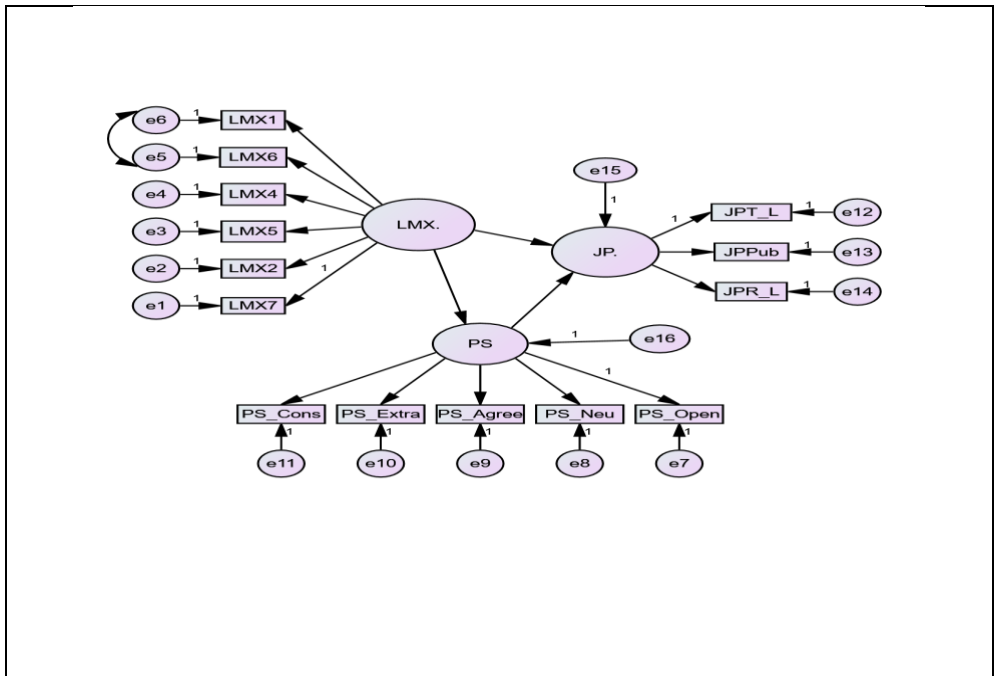
$\chi2$ /df = 3.03; CFI=0.92; and RMSEA= 0.08

Note : JP= Job Performance; JPT= JP- Teaching; JPR= JP- Research; JPPub= JP-Publication; LMX=Leader-member Exchange; PSCons = Personality-Conscientiousness ; PSExtra= Personality -Extraversion ; PSAgree= Personality-Agreebleness ; PSNeuro= Personality-Neuroticism; PSOpen= Personality-Openness

Table 9 : The Regression Path Coefficients and Their Significance Based on P-Value < 0.05

Constructs				Estimate	S.E	Beta	C.R	P	Result
H1	JP	<---	LMX	-.049	.045	-0.26	6.107	***	Significant
H2	PS	<---	LMX	0.273	0.022	0.42	-2.214	.027	Significant
H3	JP	<---	PS	0.315	0.045	1.07	7.037	***	Significant

Note 1: JP= Job Performance; LMX= Leader-member Exchange; PS= Personality
Note 2: Significant level: p<0.05

The analysis results provide support to three hypotheses for the direct path coefficient. In addition, among all variables, personality was found to have the most substantial effect on job performance (β=1.07, P<0.05), followed by LMX towards personality (β= 0.42, p<0.05). This study also revealed that LMX had a negative relationship job performance but was significantly affected (β= -0.26, p <0.05). Hypotheses 1 to 3 are supported.

This study used the step outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986), to confirm the test for mediation. The steps are: a) The predictor is related to the dependent variable; b) The predictor is related to the mediator; c) The mediator affects the dependent variable when the predictor is controlled for and reduces the relationship between the predictor and the dependent variable. In this study, personality acts as a mediating variable, where LMX will influence personality, and personality will impact job performance. In Table 9, it was found that LMX significantly affect the personality of academic staff, and personality affects job performance. It showed that all path values are significant at p<0.05 for all three variables. Therefore, the initial conclusion that can be drawn is that the tested model supports Hypothesis 4.

Furthermore, to ensure mediation in the above relationship, the researcher has applied the method introduced by Baron and Kenny (1986). Three steps of testing were performed. First, regression was done on the value of the effect of LMX on personality (PS). The regression coefficient value obtained is β=0.42, which is significant at p<0.05. Second, the regression coefficient value (β= 1.07) between the mediating variable of personality (PS) and job performance (JP) was also significant. Third, the effect value of the regression coefficient between LMX and job performance (JP) has decreased from β=0.42 to β= -0.26 (significant at p<0.05) after the personality (PS) variable is included in the model. With this, it can be concluded that there has been partial mediation of personality (PS) in the relationship between the LMX and job performance (JP).

4.4. Discussion

The first hypothesis in this study hypothesized that there was a significant relationship between LMX and job performance. The result from data analysis shows a significant effect of LMX on personality. The significant effect of LMX and job performance is consistent with the previous studies (Rhee, Zhao and Kim, 2014; Katou and Budhwar, 2014; Shantz, Alfes, and Arevshatian, 2016; Martin et al., 2016). However, the effect was negative. In other words, this study found that the practice of LMX in an organization would reduce the academic staff's job performance in this study. Such a scenario is possible because implementing LMX in an organization minimizes the employees' level of job satisfaction (Erdogan & Bauer, 2010) and commitment (Schyns, 2006).

From the perspective of HEIs, the negative link between LMX and job performance is possible because the academic staff in this context do not need close supervision from their leader. The nature of work in HEIs is very flexible, enabling the academic staff to manage their work independently.

The second hypothesis was that LMX was assumed to have a significant effect on personality. The result from data analysis showed a significant effect of LMX on the personality of academic staff. In other words, the LMX is an important factor that can enhance employees' personalities at private HEIs. The finding of this study is consistent with the previous studies that indicate employees who enjoy a high-quality exchange relationship with their superior may show a positive personality (Van Dyne et al., 2008; Sekiguchi, 2010; Zhang et al., 2015). There are various personalities that can be produced through the LMX. For example, High-quality LMX involves high levels of interpersonal trust, which carry the relationship beyond the formal employment contract (Dienesch and Liden, 1986). In another study, Runhaar et al. (2013) suggested that to encourage employees to exert extra effort to ensure organizational success, managers should establish high LMX with their subordinates. Meanwhile Sekiguchi (2010) argued that employees who enjoy a high LMX may show a pleasant personality (i.e., believing that their managers are more likely to accept mistakes as learning experiences and encouraging them to try things beyond their required tasks).

This study posits the personality could have a significant effect on job performance. The result from data analysis provides support to hypothesis 3. In other words, personality positively contributes to employees' job performance at private HEIs. The finding is consistent with previous studies (Nikolaou & Robertson, 2001; Abubakr, Abdel Rahman & Adeija, 2010; Raja et al., 2011; Chua Bee Seok, 2011; Kappagoda & Sampath, 2013; Ingarianti & Tri Muji, 2014; John, Oliver & Srivastava, 2014; Cheng-Liang & Mark, 2014;) that recognized the importance of personality to the development of job performance of employees. Specifically, this study reveals that organizations must ensure that they have the big five personality traits if they want to improve their employees' performance. First is extraversion, which refers to active, friendly, motivated, optimistic, and self-confident employees. Second, conscientiousness which refers to employees who are slightly more ambiguous, reliable, careful, and good at planning and hard work. Third, agreeableness which can be shown through actions that help others, like kindness, sympathy, and working together. Fourth, openness refers to those employees who have the idea of imagination, listen, and accept ideas. Fifth, neuroticism or emotional instability represents the level of adjustment that can control stress and anxiety.

Lastly, in hypothesis 4 in this study, personality has been posited to mediate between LMX and job performance. In other words, this study argues that work environment factors such as LMX will influence employees' personality, which can help them perform their job. An academic staff's personality traits can develop positive emotions, and cognitive and behavioural values, which add to the efficacy of work performance. The study confirmed the role of personality as a mediator between LMX and job performance. This finding is essential to the development of knowledge in the field of management. Previous studies have not examined the role of personality as a mediator in the LMX-job performance relationship. The previous studies only verified the role of personality as a mediator in the relationship between Islamic work ethics and employee performance (Awais et al., 2013), in the relationship between intrinsic motivation to accomplish and the student's Grade point average (GPA) (Komarraju, Karau & Schmeck, 2009) and in the relationship between locus of control and depression (Clarke, Koch & Hill, 2004).

5. CONCLUSION

This study explored the mediating role of personality in the relationship between LMX and job performance predictors of academic staff job performance in private HEIs, particularly the Islamic University Colleges in Malaysia that participated in SETARA 2019 and achieved tier four (competitive) and tier three (moderately competitive). The data of this study provides support to all of the hypotheses tested. The results also indicated that personality partially mediates the relationship between LMX and job performance. From the theoretical perspective, this study extends the existing literature by verifying the effect of LMX and personality on job performance in a particular context. This study also contributes to the body of knowledge by providing empirical evidence about the role of personality as a mediator in the relationship between LMX and job performance. By adequately understanding the effect of those factors on academic staff job performance, private HEIs can plan appropriate strategies and mechanisms to improve existing LMX programs and academic staff personality. Remarkably, the empirical findings suggest ways private HEIs can improve their academic staff job performance and serve as a guide in achieving a higher education ranking system to meet the global competition. Finally, the study concluded with some identified limitations that gave ways for future study directions. This study is cross-sectional; the data was collected at one point. Future studies may improve this aspect by conducting a longitudinal study to verify the findings of this study. The research applies a quantitative method to test the research framework. Future studies may replicate the study with a qualitative method to understand how the relationship between variables occurs. Qualitative data may provide a better understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations, thus uncovering trends in thoughts and opinions and diving deeper into the problem.

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