

## **Job Satisfaction among Academic Staff: A Case Study in the Public University in Malaysia**

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**Abstract:** The study reported here perceived atmosphere, research, teaching and learning, benefits and governance as factors contributing towards job satisfaction among the academic staffs of public universities in Malaysia under the premises of existing literature. This study adopted a cross-sectional design and quantitative data was collected from the 71 selected respondents working as academic staff in a public university within Peninsular Malaysia. Findings of this study revealed that teaching and learning, benefits and governance has significant effect on the job satisfaction of academicians in public universities of Malaysia. Particularly benefits and governance have been found to have a highly significant effect on the job satisfaction level of academics. In order to enhance job satisfaction among the academics, the packages and policies of universities should therefore focus on improving benefits for the academicians and imply more liberalizing governance upon them.

**Key words:** Employee satisfaction, academic staff, public university, effect, Malaysia

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### **INTRODUCTION**

**Universities, academics and job satisfaction:** Education is perceived as one of the most significant institutional organisations of any nation. Tertiary educational institutions such as Public Universities are professional service providing organizations that are responsible for creating and cultivating knowledge required to build a sustainable world. Higher education institutes primarily exist for providing in-depth knowledge, educating students, seeking academic development and for coordinating with national development demands (Chen *et al.*, 2006). In fact, prior study acclaimed universities as the highest source of knowledge responsible to train the future workforce to become experts in diverse fields (Basak and Govender, 2015; Khalid *et al.*, 2012).

Although in higher educational institutions such as public universities both academic and non-academic personnel play vital role (Amazt and Idris, 2012) in providing services, the academic work force have emerged as a key resource for their employers in capturing the objectives of the institution (Capelleras, 2005) and thereby play vital role in determining the success of any educational entity (Nawi *et al.*, 2016). The primary and universal tasks of academicians include teaching,

researching, administration and management chores (Bentley *et al.*, 2013; Oshagbemi, 2000). The successes of educational programs depend highly on the major contributions of involvement, effort and professionalization of academicians (Noordin and Jusoff, 2009). According to research the core academic human assets employed in universities play vital role in promoting and producing outstanding graduates (Mustapha, 2013) and thereby help educational institutes to succeed (Bentley *et al.*, 2013). Particularly in Malaysia, academics perform significant roles in determining the success of the educational entity by engaging themselves in teaching, consultation, research and publication (Nawi *et al.*, 2016).

Job satisfaction among employees leading to employee commitment towards organizations is a continuing and significant topic of research (Ekvanyan, 2012; Malik, 2011). The concept of satisfaction refers to the extent to which an employee feels negatively or positively about their job as a result of the appraisal of one's job in achieving or aiding the achievement of one's job value and recognition (Jenaibi, 2010; Locke, 1976; Odom *et al.*, 1990). According to research, job satisfaction has been extensively explored in management literature due to its importance to the physical and mental well-being of an employee (Malik, 2011; Rashid and

Rashid, 2011). Provided its association with retention (Mustapha, 2013; Paul and Phua, 2011), job satisfaction is assumed to significantly influence operations of an organization entirely and is coined as an instrument to determine the success of any organization (Nawi *et al.*, 2016; Malik, 2011).

The logic is simple, both social and behavioural science research indicates that job satisfaction and job performance are correlated positively (Bowron and Todd, 1999), therefore if organizations can provide satisfaction to their employees, it not only improves the image of the respective organization but also increases the productivity and motivation of employees resulting in enhanced customer satisfaction and thereby ensuring organizational sustainability. In terms of higher educational institutes, job satisfaction of academic staff, their retention and their commitment are crucial conditions for an efficient academic institution and therefore it is vital that the needs of academicians are satisfied and supported in order to extract the best service required for the success of any university (Nawi *et al.*, 2016; Kusku, 2003; Noordin and Jusoff, 2009). According to research both job satisfaction and motivation play significant role among academics and contributes positively towards outcomes in terms of job performance, enhanced quality and productivity of the involved institutions, lower employee turnover and student's learning (Machado *et al.*, 2014; Noordin and Jusoff, 2009; Toker, 2011).

**Problem statement:** In order to continue contributing successfully in both national and global economy, universities need a rapidly advanced and more technically compatible researcher environment that calls for more educated and highly skilled work force compared to the current situation. Job satisfaction is one of the major organizational factors that plays effective role on employee attitude, feeling, reactions and behaviors at their work place. Under such backdrop, the job expectations of university academicians have been growing exponentially resulting in a combination of escalated work stress and declining levels of job satisfaction and morale (Noordin and Jusoff, 2009). In terms of educational institutes, job satisfaction of academicians their loyalty, retention and their commitment are crucial conditions for an effective academic entity and therefore it is vital that the needs of academicians are satisfied and supported in order to extract the best service required for the success of any university (Nawi *et al.*, 2016; Noordin and Jusoff, 2009; Mustapha, 2013).

Although, job satisfaction among academicians is an issue well exploited (Ekvaniyan, 2012; Kusku, 2003; Malik,

2011; Rashid and Rashid, 2011; Toker, 2011), most previous studies on job satisfaction among academic staff took into consideration the general job satisfaction factors that contribute towards satisfaction and dissatisfaction only. Conversely although it is well established that the validated measure of the level of job satisfaction among employees is the most valuable information regarding employees for an organization (Roznowski *et al.*, 1998) that must not be ignored, extremely few organizations regard job satisfaction seriously (Ramseook *et al.*, 2009). Perhaps this reality perused previous research that stressed on more rigorous research required to be carried out on job satisfaction among academicians, given the rapid growth of educational systems currently (Lacy and Sheehan, 1997; Toker, 2011).

In terms of Malaysia, earlier research found that academicians in the country perceive a low satisfaction towards job related factors such as interpersonal relations, achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, career advancement, working conditions, job security, social status and personal and job life balance (Hashim, 1985). Academicians are the backbone of and educational settings, burdened with the immense responsibility of promoting and producing outstanding graduates (Mustapha, 2013). This is why, the issue of job satisfaction among academic staff is very crucial (Nawi *et al.*, 2016) and hence this study aims to identify the factors that lead to satisfaction among academic staff in public universities which is essential in order to understand the level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction associated with the job of academicians in Malaysia.

## **Literature review**

**Higher education in Malaysia:** Higher education institutions in Malaysia have been developed to cater the demands for higher education in the country (Nawi *et al.*, 2016; Mustapha, 2013). According to [studymalaysia.com](http://studymalaysia.com), Malaysia is home >500 institutes of higher learning serving potential students from both home and abroad, including 20 public universities, 53 private universities and six foreign university branch campuses, all. The country also accommodates 403 private colleges, 30 polytechnics and 73 public community colleges as at 2011. According to Higher Education Act, Higher education in Malaysia is governed by The Ministry of Higher Education that established the Malaysian Qualifications Framework and the Malaysian Qualifications Agency to support the national agenda of conducting quality research, providing quality teaching and thereby meet the national accreditation standard (Mustapha, 2013). These well-developed entities in the

country have proved very influential in endorsing systematic reviews of various courses and programs based on set international standards and criteria (Sohail and Daud, 2009).

**Review of factors affecting job satisfaction among academic staff:** The significance of universities as educational institution and their academicians as producers of outstanding graduates have attracted many researchers to study job satisfaction among academic workforce (Ahsan *et al.*, 2009; Gebremichael and Rao, 2013; Kellison and James, 2011; Olorunsola, 2010). Organizations need to address the needs of their staff and provide them with a convenient environment in order to make them satisfied in their jobs (Ahsan *et al.*, 2009). Such an attitude of the employer would create positive inner feelings within the employees for their organizations who would thereby feel motivated in performing their jobs (Kellison and James, 2011); resulting in lower staff turnover and enhanced employee productivity at work (Santhapparaj and Alam, 2005). Research found that rewards such as earnings, incentives, promotion, appreciation and opportunities for progression significantly affects job satisfaction (Aslan, 2001; Taylor, 1911).

Factors including productivity, efficiency, relationship among employees, burnout and absenteeism have evolved as a centre theme while researching job satisfaction among employees (Mehrad *et al.*, 2015). Particularly, job satisfaction of university teachers is found related to higher education functions associated with their daily work (Chen *et al.*, 2006). Previous empirical studies confirmed that morality, relationship between co-workers, students, sense of community, university atmosphere and work stress affects job satisfaction among academic staffs (Borg *et al.*, 1991; Kyzyltepe, 2008; Lacy and Sheehan, 1997).

Evidence also exist proving supervision, authority, interpersonal relationships, organizational commitment, facilities and policies, income, workload and the work itself, contribute towards satisfaction of academicians in their jobs (Rubaish *et al.*, 2011). Other previous study revealed factors such as remuneration, duties work environment, management, decision-making styles and hygiene of the university affect job satisfaction of academic staff (Amazt and Idris, 2011; Mohamad *et al.*, 2013). Moreover social status, compensation, liberty of selecting teaching methods and opportunity to utilize abilities have also been found to influence job satisfaction among academicians (Chua, 2010; Ssesanga and Garrett, 2005; Toker, 2011).

**Theoretical foundation:** The theoretical foundations of job satisfaction can be traced back to Maslow *et al.* (1998)

who forwarded the Motivation and Personality theory that explains how a person achieves satisfaction with a diversity of personal requirements in the context of employment. Maslow *et al.* (1998) divided requirements into five categories as follows: Level 1, psychological; level 2, security; level 3, social; level 4, esteem and level 5, self-actualization. Later in 1959 Herzberg added two new and essential factors called intrinsic and extrinsic elements to the job satisfaction paradigm. The scholar posited that intrinsic elements include actual content of work namely achievement, responsibility and recognition and are referred as 'motivational' factors that have a strong relationship with job satisfaction. Meanwhile, the extrinsic factors normally refer to the work environment, salary, size of the class as well as the staff and benefits. All these elements are known as the 'hygiene' factors in relation to job satisfaction. Herzberg *et al.* (1959)'s findings indicated that motivational factors can lead to satisfaction and hygiene factors can lead to dissatisfaction when people do not fulfil or meet the requirements made by the company they work with.

Based on theory and the literature review of job satisfaction among academic staff, this study adapted the research model from previous research (Lacy and Sheehan, 1997) to measure the job satisfaction among academicians working in public universities in Malaysia. The selection is based on the fact that all Malaysian academicians need to engage in teaching, consultation, research and publication (Nawi *et al.*, 2016) and the concept is applicable to all academic staff around the globe who are presumed to carry out similar work activities thereby experiencing similar concerns (Bentley *et al.*, 2013). Moreover, the model is expected to appropriately measure job satisfaction among academicians as the instrument of present study has already been used in similar studies around the world. According to the present study, the factors responsible for job satisfaction among academic staff in Malaysia include atmosphere of the university, research, training and learning, benefits and governance and therefore, theoretical frame work for this study could be represented by the following (Fig. 1):

**Atmosphere and job satisfaction:** University Atmosphere is a well used construct to measure Job Satisfaction among Academicians (Lacy and Sheehan, 1997) and has been statistically found to affect job satisfaction among academics (Aslan, 2001; Malik, 2011; Sokoya, 2000). Previous study found that a healthy atmosphere increases the overall productivity of an educational institution (Noordin and Jusoff, 2009). Recent research also indicates that in case of higher education, a healthy atmosphere in universities is a compulsory prerequisite to enhance, not only job satisfaction but also the performance of academic

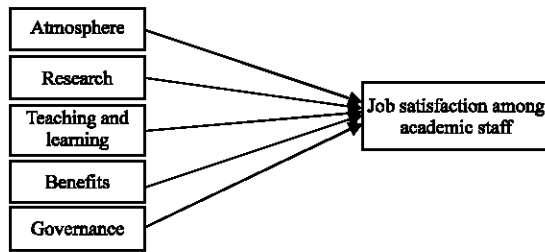


Fig. 1: Research framework adapted from Lacy and Sheehan (1997) to measure job satisfaction among academics in public universities in Malaysia

staff (Baloch and Khan, 2010; Basak and Govender, 2015; Santhapparaj and Alam, 2005). Research particularly disclosed, different elements of work atmosphere effect job satisfaction differently, some elements induce satisfaction while others cause dissatisfaction among academics (Ssesanga and Garrett, 2005). In another study (Kyzyltepe, 2008), university teacher expressed that atmosphere in the faculty significantly influences them in terms of their career, re-emphasising that working atmosphere affects job satisfaction (Basak and Govender, 2015). Considering the above it is apparent that work atmosphere has a significant relationship with job satisfaction among academic staff in Malaysia and hence, the study forwards the following hypothesis:

- H<sub>1</sub>: Atmosphere has a significant relationship with job satisfaction among academic staff

**Research and job satisfaction:** A strong linkage exists between job satisfaction of academicians and different research related factors (Oshagbemi, 2000). Prior research found research requirements as the most satisfying element of academic work among academic staff (Pearson and Seiler, 1983). In another, previous study, freedom of research and publication is found to cause satisfaction among academicians while lack of research grants and library facilities is found to induce dissatisfaction among academicians (Ssesanga and Garrett, 2005) proving the association between research and job satisfaction among academicians. According to another study in Turkey, university teachers stated that conducting research related to their field is significant in terms of their careers (Kyzyltepe, 2008). Recent research also attributed support of research as a factor to increase job satisfaction among academics working in universities (Basak and Govender, 2015; Santhapparaj and Alam, 2005). Thus it is only expected rationally that academicians who are provided better opportunities by their universities, in terms of research and publication, would tend to more satisfied towards there jobs and therefore, this study hypothesize:

- H<sub>2</sub>: Research has a significant relationship with job satisfaction among academic staff

**Teaching, learning and job satisfaction:** Teaching related factors also contribute for most of university teachers' job related satisfaction (Oshagbemi, 2000). In a research based in Uganda, findings revealed that academics highly derived job satisfaction from intrinsic factors such as teaching and interest expressed by students in learning the courses taught (Ssesanga and Garrett, 2005). Earlier research established the academicians derive job satisfaction from teaching (Hill, 1986) and the construct along with its dimensions are the most satisfying element of academic work among the academic staff (Pearson and Seiler, 1983). In a related study, academicians also voted life-long teaching and learning as significant to their career and ideals (Kyzyltepe, 2008). More recently a study held that support for teaching increases job satisfaction among university academicians (Basak and Govender, 2015; Santhapparaj and Alam, 2005). Considering the aforesaid, this study therefore hypothesize that teaching and learning are constructs that significantly influences job satisfaction of academic staff in Malaysia and hence this study retains the following hypothesis:

- H<sub>3</sub>: Teaching and learning has a significant relationship with job satisfaction among academic staff

**Benefits and job satisfaction:** In terms of job related benefits, earlier research stated that salary paid and fringe benefits motivates academicians and predicates job satisfaction (Hill, 1986; Santhapparaj and Alam, 2005; Sokoya, 2000; Williams, 1995) and therefore this study considers job benefits as a significant construct. A study in Uganda, found inadequate and irregular salary causes dissatisfaction among academics (Ssesanga and Garrett, 2005), thereby re-establishing the linkage between benefits and job satisfaction. Similar were the findings of an earlier study (Pearson and Seiler, 1983) that found lower compensation caused dissatisfaction among academicians. Another, previous study also upheld that employees receiving lower salaries usually suffer serious upheaval in regards to job satisfaction (Amzat and Idris, 2012). Interestingly recent studies support that financial rewards and compensation given to employee positively impact academicians' level of job satisfaction in universities (Mumtaz *et al.*, 2011; Kusku, 2003; Noordin and Jusoff, 2009; Mustapha, 2013; Toker, 2011). Based on literature, this study expects that job related benefits significantly influence job satisfaction level of academic staff in Malaysian universities, thereby positing the following hypothesis:

- H<sub>4</sub>: Benefits has a significant relationship with job satisfaction among academic staff

**Governance and job satisfaction:** As for governance, a previous study showed that certain elements of governance such as clarity of role in the department and influence in departmental administration, influenced satisfaction among academics where as other elements such as relationship with university administration, secretarial support, policy related issues and communication with administration are responsible to cause dissatisfaction among academic staff (Ssesanga and Garrett, 2005). The finding are in line with prior research (Hill, 1986) that found administrative features extrinsically motivated academic staff. Recent research also highlighted that a supportive administration and autonomy affects the attitude of academic staff positively while increased bureaucratic liability has a negative effect on job satisfaction levels of academics (Noordin and Jusoff, 2009; Paul and Phua, 2011). It is understood that governance related dimensions such as autonomy, bureaucracy, etc effects the job satisfaction of academic staff employed in public universities in Malaysia and hence, this study forwards the following hypothesis:

- H<sub>5</sub>: Governance has a significant relationship with job satisfaction among academic staff

## **MATERIALS AND METHODS**

**Sample and data collection:** The population of this study consists of academic staff in one public university in Malaysia (University X). Researchers have contacted Human Resource Department at University X to get the total of active academic and nonacademic staff. Based on data given, a total of 1052 staffs are gathered. The sample is selected by using random sampling method. A simple random sample is obtained by picking the every unit in the population has an equivalent possibility of being chosen. Hence, simple random sampling is free from sampling bias since it goes without pre-determined. Based on Krejcie and Morgan table, the minimum sample requires for academic staff is 169 but a total of 250 were invited to participate in this study. However, only 71 respondents are responding well. Data were collected using online survey. The platform used for this study is Google form. This platform is chosen because it is one of the easier ways to obtain the required information from the respondents due to University X use Gmail account as its primary email. In fact, the features brought by Google Forms such as Docs editors where users can get information on how to create and work with Google Forms

as well as it is free. Using Google Forms can helps to generate any number of option and surveys using for free. Fundamentally, the unlimited number of respondents can contribute in such surveys by using the web browser. In Google forms the survey answers and data will be automatically collected in Google spread sheets. Besides that Google Forms maintain a wide-ranging questions that include scale and grid where normally not provided in other web polling services.

**Measures:** The online survey items for academic staff are adapted from Lacy and Sheehan (1997). Questionnaire for academic staff consist of Section A which describe on demographic profiles, Section B on evaluation on atmosphere, research, teaching, administration and governance and Section C on different aspects of job satisfaction. The wording of the questionnaire was changed to fit the Malaysian context. This study used 7 Likert Scale ranging from 1 = "Highly dissatisfied" to 7 = "Highly satisfied". Then, data were analyzed via Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) by using SPSS AMOS 22.0. The goodness-of-fit of the SEM models was evaluated using a chi-square value with a nonsignificant p-value indicating a good fit, RMSEA (root mean square error of approximation with values of 0.05 or less indicating good fit and CFI (comparative fit index) and TLI (Tucker-Lewis Index) with values 0.90 or above showing a good fit.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Demographic characteristics:** As presented in Table 1, among 71 academic respondents, 50.7% or 36 respondents are male and 49.3% or 35 respondents are female. Majority respondents are is 78.9% or 56 respondents for academic are Malay about 70.4% of academic respondents are married while 66.3%. Then, about 28.2% of academic respondents are single. The five location campuses on duty are Campus of Bachok, Campus of Jeli, Campus of Padang Tembak, City Campus and Campus of Kuala Lumpur. Most of the academic respondents are from Campus of Jeli (36.7% or 26 respondents) and City Campus (32.4% or 23 respondents). There are four categories for position status that are contract, contract for service, permanent and temporary. Majority of academic and non-academic respondents are permanent that is about 73.2% or 52 respondents and 66.3% or 65 respondents respectively (Table 1).

**Reliability analysis:** Cronbach's alpha is a coefficient of reliability commonly used as a measure of internal consistency or reliability of a psychometric test score for

Table 1: Demographic characteristics of the respondents

Category	Academic staff	
	N	Percentage
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	36	50.7
Female	35	49.3
<b>Ethnicity</b>		
Malay	56	78.9
Chinese	8	11.3
Indian	4	5.6
Others	3	4.2
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	50	70.4
Single	20	28.2
Divorced	1	1.4
<b>Campus on duty</b>		
Campus of Bachok	17	23.9
Campus of Jeli	26	36.7
Campus of Padang Tembak	5	7.0
City Campus	23	32.4
Campus of KL	0	0.0
<b>Position status</b>		
Contract	15	21.1
Contract (for service)	0	0.0
Permanent	52	73.2
Temporary	4	5.7

Table 2: Reliability analysis for job satisfaction among academic staff

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha
Job satisfaction	4	0.896
Atmosphere	8	0.874
Research	5	0.768
Teaching and learning	6	0.844
Benefits	6	0.886
Governance	5	0.854

a sample. The reliability test presented in Table 2, shows that all Cronbach's alpha values are >0.7 for all the variables for job satisfaction among academic staff. Cronbach's alpha for job satisfaction, atmosphere, research, teaching and learning, benefits and governance are 0.896, 0.874, 0.768, 0.844, 0.886 and 0.854, respectively. Therefore, data for all the variables for job satisfaction among academic staff are reliable and can be used for analysis (Table 2).

**Hypothesis testing results using structural equation modeling:** Evaluation of the structural model was examined based a fitness indices. These indices indicate ow well the proposed model captured the covariance among items in the measurement model. The fitness index as a result and evaluation of the job satisfaction model for academic staff and non-academic staff are extracted and presented in Table 3. Most of the index values were close approximately to the recommended values of good model.

Furthermore, the study ultimately investigates whether the atmosphere, research, teaching and learning, benefits and governance were the factors that influence on job satisfaction among academic staff. The standardize

Table 3: The fitness indices for the structural model

Fitness indices	Structural model		
	Academic staff	Non academic staff	Benchmark
CMIN/df	3.002	2.492	<3.0
GFI	0.778	0.771	>0.9
AGFI	0.805	0.832	>0.9
CFI	0.857	0.603	>0.9
RMSEA	0.758	0.824	>0.8

Table 4: The standardized regression weight and the corresponding probability of values of all constructs for job satisfaction among academic staff

Construct	Path	Estimate ( $\beta$ )	SE	p-value
<b>Job satisfaction</b>				
Atmosphere	-->	0.059	0.109	0.587
Teaching and learning	-->	0.602	0.097	0.002**
Benefits	-->	0.694	0.155	***
Research	-->	0.097	0.090	0.278
Governance	-->	0.607	0.084	***

\*\*\*Indicate highly significant,  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*Indicate moderate significant,  $p < 0.05$

regression weights as well as the significance of the estimates are described in Table 4. Below are some discussions on the hypotheses tested.

- $H_1$ : There is a significant influence of atmosphere, research, teaching and learning, benefits and governance on job satisfaction among academic staff

The study found that teaching and learning, benefits and governance were positively and significantly related to job satisfaction among academic staff ( $p < 0.05$ ). Among these factors, it was found that benefits factor has the highest impact ( $\beta = 0.694$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, the proposed hypothesis is supported.

The findings from the study unexpectedly revealed that the effect of atmosphere on job satisfaction is statistically not significant ( $H_1$ ). This indicates that academic staffs in Malaysia do not derive job satisfaction from the atmosphere of their university. Teaching and learning proved to have a moderate significant effect on the job satisfaction of academic staff ( $H_2$ ) which indicates that academics in public universities of Malaysia derive job satisfaction from teaching and learning related activities associated with their jobs. Benefits are found to have a highly significant effect on job satisfaction of academic staff disclosing that the hypothesis ( $H_3$ ) is also supported and in line with literature (Noordin and Jusoff, 2009; Toker, 2011) as academic staff seem to depend highly on job related benefit in order to achieve job satisfaction. The construct, research is also found to have a statistically insignificant effect on job satisfaction of academic staff ( $H_4$ ). This means the factors and dimensions related to research in a university do not provide satisfaction to the academicians in their jobs. Lastly, governance is found to have a high significant effect on job satisfaction of academic staff ( $H_5$ ), reflecting

that academic staff in public universities in Malaysia are highly sensitive towards governance related matters such as autonomy of teaching or interference of university administration.

## CONCLUSION

The major contribution of this study comes in the form of the Malaysian context which has been novel aspect of present study. This is how the study touches the body of knowledge and hence refines the scope of theory and thereby contributes to the existing literature related to job satisfaction among the public university academic staff, specifically in Malaysian context. In terms of practical implications, the knowledge generated from this study would support the relevant policy makers of government and university management alike, to refine their current policies for championing the issue job satisfaction among academicians which is essential not to retain the top talent but also to exact the best performance from the employee that would in turn assure success of the higher educational institutes. This study has several limitations as it was mostly restricted to one public university in Malaysia. Thus, the results cannot be generalized to other academic institutions in Malaysia due to different practices and facilities offered to the employees. Therefore, the same study could be conducted in different academic institution to gather more understanding on the satisfaction among academic institution staffs.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Nevertheless the study would guide future researchers to holistically understand the factors effecting job satisfaction of academicians employed in public universities of Malaysia and further research is highly recommended by integrating more constructs into the study's model or by implementing the same model in a different cultural or geographical setting to reveal deeper and more generalized understanding of job satisfaction among academic staffs.

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