The Perception of E-Leadership Competencies and Employee Job Performance among Employees in Higher Educational Institutions in Malaysia

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Abstract

This study explores the relationship between the perception of e-leadership competencies and employee job performance among employees (academics and non-academics) in higher educational institutions in Malaysia by using Fiedler Contingency Model of Leadership. Besides, this study also investigates the difference between the perception of e-leadership competencies among academics and non-academics. e-leadership competencies refer to the ability of leaders to utilize information communication technologies (ICTs), adopting them by adding value to people and organizations and having the ability to know how to use them. In this study, e-leadership competencies were measured based on three dimensions from Fiedler Contingency Model of Leadership: leader-member relations, task structure, and position power in a nationwide survey. A survey questionnaire was used as the instrument to solicit the perception of 154 higher educational institution employees. Results showed that there were positive and moderate relationships between the perception of e-leadership competencies and employee job performance for all three dimensions. Moreover, results also indicated that there was not statistically difference between the perception of e-leadership competencies among academics and non-academics

Keywords: *E-Leadership Competencies, Employee Job Performance, Higher Educational Institutions, Malaysia*

Persepsi Kompetensi E-Kepimpinan dan Prestasi Kerja Pekerja Institusi Pengajian Tinggi di Malaysia

Abstrak

Kajian ini meneroka hubungan antara persepsi kompetensi e-kepimpinan dan prestasi kerja pekerja (akademik dan bukan akademik) dalam institusi pengajian tinggi di Malaysia dengan menggunakan Model Kebolehtadbiran Fiedler. Selain itu, kajian ini juga menyiasat perbezaan di antara persepsi kompetensi e-kepimpinan di kalangan pekerja akademik dan bukan akademik. Kompetensi e-kepimpinan merujuk kepada keupayaan pemimpin untuk menggunakan teknologi maklumat dan komunikasi (ICT), mengadapsinya dengan menambah nilai kepada individu dan organisasi, serta mempunyai kemahiran untuk menggunakannya. Dalam kajian ini, kompetensi e-kepimpinan diukur berdasarkan tiga dimensi daripada Model Kebolehtadbiran Fiedler: hubungan pemimpin-anggota, struktur tugas, dan Kedudukan kuasa dalam survey kebangsaan. Satu soal selidik digunakan sebagai instrumen untuk mendapatkan persepsi 154 pekerja institusi pengajian tinggi. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan positif dan sederhana antara persepsi kompetensi e-kepimpinan dan prestasi kerja pekerja untuk ketiga-tiga dimensi tersebut. Selain itu, keputusan juga menunjukkan bahawa tidak terdapat perbezaan secara statistik antara persepsi kompetensi e-kepimpinan dalam kalangan pekerja akademik dan bukan akademik.

Kata Kunci: *Kompetensi E-Kepimpinan, Prestasi Kerja, Institusi Pengajian Tinggi, Malaysia*

Background of the Study

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, the role of leadership in organizations has undergone a significant transformation. The emergence of electronic leadership, also known as e-leadership, has gained prominence as organizations increasingly rely on digital technologies and virtual work environments (Sharma et al., 2021). This transformation has not spared the higher educational institutions in Malaysia, where e-leadership competencies have become crucial for effectively managing employees and ensuring their job performance.

E-leadership refers to the ability of leaders to navigate and excel in the digital realm, enhancing technological advancements to inspire, motivate, and guide their teams (Avolio et al., 2020). It encompasses a

range of competencies, including digital literacy, strategic thinking, communication skills, and adaptability to change. As higher educational institutions in Malaysia integrate technology into their administrative processes and educational systems especially during the pandemic, e-leadership becomes important for leaders to effectively lead and motivate their employees towards achieving organizational goals.

The perception of e-leadership competencies and their impact on employee job performance is a significant area of research within the context of higher educational institutions in Malaysia. Understanding how employees perceive e-leadership and its correlation with job performance can provide valuable insights for organizations seeking to enhance their leadership practices in the digital era. By identifying the specific e-leadership competencies that are most valued by employees, organizations can develop targeted training programs and initiatives to nurture these skills among their leaders.

Despite the growing emphasis on e-leadership, there is limited research specifically focusing on academics and non- academics in higher educational institutions. Previous research on e- leadership for example, has focused on government employees (Rokhman & Tobirin 2022), information technologies (IT) employees (Sergio et al, 2023) and telecommunication employees and customers (Bans- Akutey & Ebem, 2023). Thus, this research aims to bridge the gap in understanding the perception of e-leadership competencies among employees in higher educational institutions in Malaysia and their impact on job performance. The findings of this study will not only contribute to the academic literature on e-leadership but also provide practical implications for organizations in the higher education sector to develop effective leadership strategies that align with the demands of the digital era.

The present study sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1: What is the level of the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) in higher educational institutions?

RQ2: What is the level of job performance among the employees?

RQ3: Is there a significant difference between the perception of e-leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) among the academics and non- academics?

RQ4: What is the relationship between the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) and employee job performance among the employees?

Literature Review

E- leadership Competencies

The 21st century has seen the evolution of e-leadership from a purely theoretical concept to some practical abilities. Drawing on the work of Avolio et al. (2014), they provide a more nuanced explanation of the notion that because "context is a crucial characteristic of e-leadership," it is important to take context into account while examining the connections between technology and leadership. According to the authors, research on leadership should concentrate on comprehending how technology has contextually embedded leadership in what is known as "e-leadership."

The contingency theory of leadership states that a leader's effectiveness is dependent on whether their leadership style is appropriate for the situation (Amanawa, 2022). This point of view holds that a person might be a great leader in one circumstance but ineffective in another. This theory contends that in order to improve your chances of succeeding as a leader, you should be able to evaluate every situation and decide whether your leadership approach would be beneficial. This typically requires self-awareness, objectivity, and flexibility. The success of a leader is also suggested to depend on the circumstances at hand by the contingency theory of leadership. When deciding if a particular leader or leadership style is suitable for a given situation, certain factors are taken into consideration. The task at hand, the leader's personality, and the composition of the group to be led are a few of these factors. The main tenet of it is that situational factors determine whether a leader succeeds or fails.

According to Fiedler (1987), a leader's behaviours are influenced by how conducive the leadership environment or situation is. The three factors listed below determine the usefulness a situation is for a leader: (i) Leaders-member relations is the degree of trust that exists between a team's leader and its members. A positive work environment is the outcome of a high level of trust. (ii) Task structure is concerned with the organization and degree of clarity of tasks. Supervisors who assign ambiguous and unorganized work are perceived negatively.

Nonetheless, leaders who take the effort to plan out clear, structured duties are viewed favourably, and (iii) Leader's position of power is based on how much control they have over their subordinates. A leader with a high degree of power might use rewards and punishments to manage the team.

In this current study, perception of e- leadership competencies and job performance among employees were measured based on the three dimensions at higher educational institutions in Malaysia.

Based on the discussion, the study hypothesized that:

H1: There is a significant difference of e-leadership competencies (leader- member relations, task structure and position power) across different employment types (academics and non- academics).
H1a: There is a significant difference of e-leadership competencies (leader- member relations) across different employment types (academics and non- academics).
H1b: There is a significant difference of e-leadership competencies (task structure) across different employment types (academics and non-academics).
H1c: There is a significant difference of e-leadership competencies (position power) across different employment types (academics and non-academics).

Employee Job Performance

Job performance is defined as scalable actions, behaviors, and outcomes that employees engage in or bring about that are linked with and contribute to organizational goals (Viswesvaran, 2000). It is an important factor that affects results on three scales: the micro (individual), the meso (team), and the macro (organization) levels (Pandey, 2019). Critical work performance factors include completing obligations, maintaining commitments, and managing duties (Lee & Lee, 2018). The literature revealed distinct conceptualizations of performance in various circumstances. As a result, it can be measured using several scales. Many studies have measured performance using self-reported data, although some have also employed supervisor or coworker ratings.

Additionally, depending on objectives, job performance can be operationalized in a variety of ways, from general ones (such as exhibiting effort, diligence, and adaptability) to specific ones (such as written and spoken communications, attendance, and adherence to

rules). In contrast to the theoretical review created by Koopmans et al. (2011), which discovered 17 generic frameworks and 18 job-specific frameworks of job performance, Salgado et al.'s (2015) meta-analysis found 10 different job-performance measures, each with its own degree of specificity. As a result, it is more difficult to generalize the results of the research because it restricts researchers from examining specific situations and increases the number of work performance metrics (Viswesvaran & Ones, 2017).

Bhardwaj and Kalia (2021) suggested that job performance may be divided into two categories: task performance and contextual performance. Task performance is the effectiveness with which employees formally complete their job tasks and contribute to the organization's technical core. Contextual performance includes voluntary organizational actions that are not necessary for the job and do not thus immediately contribute to the technical core. Activities that are not officially related to the profession but may be important for all jobs are included in the contextual performance. These activities include helping, working with people, and volunteering. Thus, employee job performance for this study refers to task performance as defined by Bhardwaj and Kalia (2021).

Relationship between E- leadership Competencies and Employee Job Performance

According to Iqbal et al. (2015), a participative leadership style has a direct impact on employee performance. Results by Saleem et al. (2019) have demonstrated that effective interactive leadership techniques improve work output. A substantial and favorable link between e-leadership and performance was found in Christian et al.'s (2020) data analysis of the workers at Honda Motorcycle dealers in Jakarta during Covid-19.

According to research on leadership effectiveness (Kashive et al., 2022), leaders play a key role in how their teams adjust to this new way of working and resolve conflicts without having to communicate with other team members directly. Concerns concerning the effects of virtual work arrangements on performance have been raised as remote work has become more common. For instance, a study by Neufeld and Fang (2005) revealed a substantial correlation between the caliber of social interactions between managers and workers who telecommute. Physical distance was discovered to act as a moderator in the relationship between leadership and performance. High quality leader-member

exchange is recognized to positively influence employee performance. However, it was also discovered that, regardless of the physical distance between managers and their subordinates, leader-member exchange can result in good performance of the followers. A prior analysis of the literature (Avlani & Charalampous, 2021) based on studies conducted between 2001 and 2019 revealed that technology skills, communication skills, and abilities to develop trust and relationships all appeared to be crucial for remote work.

Based on the discussion, the study hypothesized that:

H2: There is a relationship between perception of e-leadership competencies (leader- member relations, task structure and position power) with employee job performance.
H2a: There is a relationship between perception of e-leadership competencies (leader- member relations) with employee job performance.
H2b: There is a relationship between perception of e-leadership competencies (task structure) with employee job performance.
H2c: There is a relationship between perception of e-leadership competencies (position power) with employee job performance.

Methodology

The quantitative research methodology was conducted to examine the research problems and objectives whereby, survey questionnaires were used to answer the research questions.

The population of this study was from two private higher educational institutions in Klang Valley. The target population was the academics and non-academics who are currently working at these educational institutions. As for the sampling technique, this research employed simple random sampling to ensure the sample is representative of the general population. Hence, all academics and non- academics staff in the educational institutions have an equal chance to participate.

The distribution of the survey was carried out via email and WhatsApp. The respondents were chosen based on their employment type, either academic or non- academic employees. 154 academics and non-academics have participated in this study.

The reliability result for pilot study and actual study is presented in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Reliability Test for E-Leadership Competencies and Employee Job Performance

Section	Variable	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha Pilot Study (*N* =30)	Cronbach's Alpha Actual Study (*N* =154)
B	Leader-member relations	7	. 956	.946
C	Task Structure	7	.956	.944
D	Position power	7	.893	.906
E	Job Performance	7	.962	.900

Findings And Analysis

Demographic characteristics of the respondents

There were 154 respondents participating in this study. More than half of the respondents were females (55%), and 70 respondents (46%) were males. As for the age, most of the respondents (61%) were from the age range of 36-50 years old, followed by 31-35 years old (14%) and 51 and above (11%). The least age range was 20-30 years old (15%). Two third of the respondents were Malays (84%), followed by Chinese (8%), Indians and others (8%). As for nationality 98% of the respondents were Malaysians and only 2% were international employees. As for the type of university, more than half (69%) of the respondents were from private university, university college or college while another 31% were from public university, university college or college. In terms of employment type, more than half of the respondents (60%) were academics and another 40% were non- academics. As majority of the respondents were academics, the highest educational level of the respondents was Master (45%), followed by bachelor's degree (23%), PhD (13%), diploma (10%) and SPM/ STPM (8%). The summary of demographic characteristics of the respondents is presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of the Respondents (*N* = 154)

Demographic Characteristic	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	70	46
	Female	84	55
	Total	**154**	**100**
Age (years old)	20-25	10	7
	26-30	12	8
	31-35	22	14
	36-40	32	21
	41-45	31	20
	46-50	30	20
	51 and above	17	11
	Total	**154**	**100**
Race	Malay	130	84
	Chinese	12	8
	Indian	5	3
	Others	7	5
	Total	**154**	**100**
Nationality	Malaysian	151	98
	International	3	2
	Total	**154**	**100**
Type of university	Public university/ university college & college	48	31
	Private university/ university college & college	106	69
	Total	**154**	**100**
Employment type	Academics	92	60
	Non- academics	62	40
	Total	**154**	**100**
Highest educational level	SPM/ STPM	12	8
	Diploma	16	10
	Bachelor's degree	36	23

	Master	69	45
	PhD	20	13
	Total	**154**	**100**

Level of the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation) among the employees

A one sample *t*-test was performed to examine the level of perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation) among the employees. The results indicate that the overall percentage is 75.8% with a mean score of 3.789 and standard deviation of 0.820, (t (154) = 11.939, p = .000). All the items are positive and significant (See Table 3).

All respondents are in agree level with all the items. The highest agree level is on the superior is trustworthy and reliable when working in virtual environment (76.9%). This is followed by the respondents level of agreement in their superior is showing a friendly relation (76.6%), superior knows how to cooperate in virtual environment (75.5%), superior is showing an interest in group work (75.2%), the employees have a good work experience working with their superior in virtual environment (74.9%), superior always encourage the employees to provide new ideas in virtual environment (74.5%) and the least is superior is good at communicating with the employees in virtual environment (74.2%).

This result shows that the level of perception of e- leadership competencies for leader- member relations in virtual environment is positive. However, superior's communication skills with the employees in virtual environment received the least percentage. This shows that the superiors are better in actions than communicating in virtual environment.

Table 3: One-sample *t*-test for level of the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation) among the employees (*N* = 154)

No.	Level of the Perception of E-leadership Competencies (leader- member relation)	*M**	*SD*	%	*t***	*p*
1	My superior is trustworthy and reliable when working in virtual environment.	3.844	0.916	76.9	11.442	.000
2	My superior is showing a friendly relation with the subordinates in virtual environment.	3.831	0.906	76.6	11.384	.000
3	My superior knows how to cooperate and coordinate his/ her work in virtual environment.	3.773	0.911	75.5	10.523	.000
4	My superior is showing an interest in group work when working in virtual environment.	3.760	0.871	75.2	10.823	.000
5	I have good work experience working with my superior in virtual environment.	3.747	0.919	74.9	10.087	.000
6	My superior always encourages the subordinates to provide new ideas in virtual environment.	3.727	0.979	74.5	9.222	.000
7	My superior is good at communicating with the subordinates in virtual environment.	3.708	0.979	74.2	8.593	.000
	Overall level of perception of e-leadership competencies (leader- member relation) (*N* = 154)	**3.789**	**.820**	**75.8**	**11.939**	**.000**

* On a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree (1 – 20%), 2 = disagree (21 – 40%), 3 = neutral (41 – 60%), 4 = agree (61 – 80%), and strongly agree (81 – 100%).

** Test value = 3

*** Two-tailed test

Level of the perception of e- leadership competencies (task structure) among the employees

One sample *t*-test was conducted to evaluate the perception of e-leadership competencies (task structure) among the employees. The results (Table 4) indicate the overall percentage is 71.2% with a mean score of 3.561 and standard deviation of 0.867, (t (154) = 8.034, p = .000). All the items are positive and significant.

The result is similar to leader- member relation whereby all items are in the agree level. In terms of task structure in virtual environment, the superior knows how to delegate task to the employees (74.0%), clear on the task goal (73.6%), knows how to make decision (73.5%), clear on the task guidelines to be given to the employees (73.0%), clear on the job description (72.3%), has multiple goal paths (71.9%) and superior prefers to have pre and post discussion of the task (70.1%).

The results indicates that superiors know and clear about their task and job description when working in virtual environment. However, pre and post discussion of the task is the least activity conducted by the leaders. Discussion is important especially in virtual environment as employees would be clearer on the task given to them.

Table 4: One-sample *t*-test for level of the perception of e- leadership competencies (task structure) among the employees (N = 154)

No.	Level of the Perception of E-leadership Competencies (task structure)	*M**	*SD*	*%*	*t***	*p*
1	My superior knows how to delegate task to the subordinates when working in virtual environment.	3.701	0.923	74.0	9.432	.000
2	My superior is clear on the task goal when working in virtual environment.	3.682	0.891	73.6	9.498	.000
3	My superior knows how to make decision when working in virtual environment.	3.675	0.956	73.5	8.768	.000
4	My superior is clear on the task guidelines to be given to the subordinates when working in virtual environment.	3.649	0.926	73.0	8.706	.000

5	My superior is clear on the job description tools of the subordinates when working in virtual environment.	3.617	0.857	72.3	8.932	.000
6	My superior has multiple goal paths when working in virtual environment.	3.597	0.911	71.9	8.136	.000
7	My superior prefers to have pre and post discussion of the task when working in virtual environment.	3.507	1.024	70.1	6.137	.000
	Overall level of perception of e-leadership competencies (task structure) (*N* = 154)	**3.561**	**.867**	**71.2**	**8.034**	**.000**

* On a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree (1 – 20%), 2 = disagree (21 – 40%), 3 = neutral (41 – 60%), 4 = agree (61 – 80%), and strongly agree (81 – 100%).

** Test value = 3

*** Two-tailed test

Level of the perception of e- leadership competencies (position power) among the employees

One sample *t*-test was carried out to examine the level of perception of e- leadership competencies (position power) among the employees. The results (Table 5) show that the overall percentage is 70.5% with mean score of 3.526 and standard deviation 0.843, (t (154) = 7.737, p = .000). All the items are positive and significant.

All items fall under level of agree but the percentage is slightly lower than the previous two dimensions (leader- member relations and task structure). The highest percentage agreement for this dimension according to respondents is, their superior has power to delegate and assign regular work to subordinates when working in virtual environment (75.3%). Besides that, the respondents also agree that when working in virtual environment, their superior has power to evaluate each subordinate personnel (73.0%), superior has power to make decision independently (72.6%), superior has power to compensate the subordinate (68.4%), superior has power to reward and punish the subordinates (67.0%), superior has power to change personnel policy

(65.5%) and superior has power to hire, fire, promote and demote the subordinates (64.%).

These findings show that the respondents feel that their superiors do have power especially in delegating task even though in virtual environment. However, in terms of compensation, reward and punishment, the superior might have some limitation as the communication is online.

Table 5: One-sample *t*-test for level of the perception of e- leadership competencies (position power) among the employees (*N* = 154)

No.	Level of the Perception of E-leadership Competencies (position power)	*M**	*SD*	%	*t***	*p*
1	My superior has power to delegate and assign regular work to subordinates when working in virtual environment.	3.766	0.831	75.3	11.446	.000
2	My superior has power to evaluate each subordinate personnel when working in virtual environment.	3.649	0.974	73.0	8.276	.000
3	My superior has power to make decision independently when working in virtual environment.	3.630	0.956	72.6	8.174	.000
4	My superior has power to compensate the subordinate when working in virtual environment.	3.422	0.969	68.4	5.407	.000
5	My superior has power to reward and punish the subordinates when working in virtual environment.	3.351	1.020	67.0	4.268	.000
6	My superior has power to change personnel policy when working in virtual environment.	3.273	1.080	65.5	3.133	.002
7	My superior has power to hire, fire, promote and demote the subordinates when working in virtual environment.	3.234	1.071	64.7	2.708	.008
	Overall level of perception of e-leadership competencies (position power) (*N* = 154)	**3.526**	**.843**	**70.5**	**7.737**	**.000**

* On a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree (1 – 20%), 2 = disagree (21 – 40%), 3 = neutral (41 – 60%), 4 = agree (61 – 80%), and strongly agree (81 – 100%).

** Test value = 3

*** Two-tailed test

Level of employees' job performance

One sample *t*-test was performed to find out the level of employee job performance. The results are summarized in Table 6. The overall percentage is 81.8% with a mean score of 4.088 and standard deviation of 0.709, (t (154) = 19.018, p = .000). All the items are positive and significant.

Out of seven items, four items are under the level of strongly agree while another three items fall under level of agree. Majority of the respondents strongly agree that they kept in mind the work result they needed to achieve (84.8%), managed to plan their work so that they finished it on time (82.9%), keeping their work skills up to date (81.8%) and able to carry out their work efficiently (81.0%). As for level of agree, the respondents mentioned that they actively participated in meetings and/or consultations (80.7%), managed their time well (78.8%) and able to come up with creative solutions for new problems (77.9%).

The findings show that the respondents are good at performing their job and able to complete task given to them by their superiors.

Table 6: One-sample *t*-test for employees' job performance (N = 154)

No.	Level of the Employee Job Performance	*M**	*SD*	*%*	*t***	*p*
1	I kept in mind the work result I needed to achieve.	4.240	0.637	84.8	24.157	.000
2	I managed to plan my work so that I finished it on time.	4.143	0.727	82.9	19.509	.000
3	I worked on keeping my work skills up to date.	4.091	0.708	81.8	19.117	.000
4	I was able to carry out my work efficiently.	4.052	0.712	81.0	18.332	.000
5	I actively participated in meetings and/or consultations.	4.033	0.896	80.7	14.299	.000
6	I managed my time well.	3.942	0.818	78.8	14.277	.000
7	I came up with creative solutions for new problems	3.896	0.751	77.9	14.803	.000
	Overall level of employee job performance (N = 154)	**4.088**	**.709**	**81.8**	**19.018**	**.000**

* On a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree (1 – 20%), 2 = disagree (21 – 40%), 3 = neutral (41 – 60%), 4 = agree (61 – 80%), and strongly agree (81 – 100%).

** Test value = 3

*** Two-tailed test

Significant difference between the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) among the academics and non- academics.

Independent sample T test was performed (Table 7) to find out the significant difference between the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) across employment type. Respondents were divided into two groups (Group 1: Academics and Group 2: Non- academics). Independent sample T test revealed that there were not statistically differences in the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) across the employment type as the p value is >0.05. For leader- member relation, independent sample T test result shows p=0.50. As for task structure, the result is p=0.117 and for position power, the result indicates p=0.258.

Thus, all hypotheses were rejected:

H1a: There is no significant difference of e-leadership competencies (leader- member relations) across different employment types (academics and non- academics).
H1b: There is no significant difference of e-leadership competencies (task structure) across different employment types (academics and non-academics).
H1c: There is no significant difference of e-leadership competencies (position power) across different employment types (academics and non-academics).

Table 7: Independent sample T test for perception of e- leadership competencies by employment types of respondents (*N* = 154)

No.	Perception of e-leadership competencies	Employment	*M**	*SD*	%	*t*	*P*
1	Leader member relations	Academic	3.766	.930	75.3	-.417	.050
		Non-academic	3.823	0.627	76.5	-.448	
2	Task structure	Academic	3.516	.918	70.3	-.790	.117
		Non-academic	3.629	.789	72.6	-.813	
3	Position power	Academic	3.511	.880	70.2	-	.258

					.270
	Non-academic	3.548	.793	71.0	-.275

* On a 5-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree (1 – 20%), 2 = disagree (21 – 40%), 3 = neutral (41 – 60%), 4 = agree (61 – 80%), and strongly agree (81 – 100%)

** Test value = 3

*** Two- -tailed test

Relationship between the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) and employee job performance.

Table 8 shows a zero-order correlation or Pearson correlation between the relationship of the level of the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) and employee job performance. As for H2a: There is a relationship between perception of e-leadership competencies (leader-member relations) with employee job performance., the results show a moderate and positive relationship between the two variables (r = .366, p = .000). H2b: There is a relationship between perception of e-leadership competencies (task structure) with employee job performance also shows similar result where the result is moderate and positive relationship (r = .347, p = .000). As for H2c: There is a relationship between perception of e-leadership competencies (position power) with employee job performance, the result is also moderate and positive relationship (r = .425, p = .000) This shows that there is a positive but moderate relationship between perception of e- leadership competencies and employee job performance. Hence, the study accepted the alternative hypothesis, H1: There is a relationship between perception of e-leadership competencies (leader- member relations, task structure and position power) with employee job performance.

Table 8: Zero-order correlation between level of the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) and employee job performance (*N* = 154)

Variable	Mean	*SD*	Employee job performance (DV)	Leader-member relation (IV1)	Task structure (IV2)	Position power (IV3)
Employee job performance (DV)	4.087	.709	1	.366	.347	.425
Leader-member relation (IV1)	3.789	.820		1	.742	.502
Task structure (IV2)	3.561	.867			1	.639
Position power (IV3)	3.526	.843				1
No. of cases (*N* = 154)						

Discussion and Conclusion

Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leadership is one of the contingency theories that states that effective leadership depends not only on the style of leading but on the control over a situation. There needs to be good leader-member relations, task with clear goals and procedures, and the ability for the leader to mete out rewards and punishments. Lacking these three in the right combination and context will result in leadership failure.

This study sought to answer the perception of e- leadership competencies and employee job performance among employees in higher educational institutions in Malaysia. In finding the answers, Fiedler Contingency Model of Leadership is used to guide the study. The population of this study consists of academics and non- academics. By using simple random sampling technique, 154 respondents participated in this study. After analyzing the respondents' demographic profile, it revealed that most of the respondents are females and most of them are between the age of 36-50 years old. Most of the respondents are Malays and employees from private higher educational institutions. 60% of the respondents were academics and they acquired master's degree.

There are four objectives of the study. The first is to find out the level of the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power). One sample *t*-test was conducted. The findings reveal that among the three dimensions (leader-member relations, task structure and position power), leader - member relation scored the highest with 75.8% (m= 3.789), followed by task structure (71.2%, m= 3.561) and position power (70.5%, m= 3.526). This study contradicted with previous findings by Yazdanmehr et al., (2020) whereby they conducted a study among teachers in Iran. Their findings revealed that the teachers were more prevalent to task structure of the leaders compared to the other two dimensions. However, the findings of this study supported Mitzberg's (1973) analysis where he stated, leader-member relation is frequent and important to organizations. Higher quality relations with subordinates are necessary to increase communication satisfaction (Mueller & Lee, 2002). Fairhurst and Chandler (1989) also stated that interaction between leaders and members is important to better understand how leaders can merge relationships including formation of in- groups and out- groups.

The second objective is to find out the level of employee job performance among the employees. Based on the findings, majority of respondents are satisfied with their job performance (81.8%). This result validated the findings of Nguyen's (2020) study, which found that job satisfaction and innovation of employees were indirectly impacted by the interaction between leaders and members. The results additionally indicated that managers should concentrate on cultivating relationships with staff members in order to enhance their job satisfaction, creativity, and output. Furthermore, Neufal and Fang (2005) stated that high quality leader- member exchange will positively reflect the employee job performance regardless of physical distance.

The third research objective is to determine a significant difference between the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) among the academics and non- academics. An independent sample T test was conducted to find the answer for this research objective. The findings show there was no statistically differences in the perception of the e- leadership competencies across the academics and non- academics. This means, the perception of e- leadership competencies similar for all employees (academics and non- academics).

The last objective of this study is to determine the relationship between the perception of e- leadership competencies (leader- member relation, task structure and position power) and employee job performance. The study disclosed that the relationship of the e- leadership competencies and employee job performance is moderate and positive for all dimensions (leader- member relations; r = .366, p = .000, task structure; r = .347, p = .000 and position power; r = .425, p = .000). The findings supported Neufeld and Fong (2005) study whereby the is substantial correlation between the level of social interactions among managers and employees who telecommute. Besides, high quality leader- member exchange is recognized to positively influence employee performance.

Conclusion

This study has shed light on the multidimensional concepts on e-leaderships and its impact on employee job performance in higher educational institutions in Malaysia. The findings in this research contribute to the existing literature by empirically examining the e-leadership concept and extending it to the context of higher education.

The study aligns with Fiedler's Contingency Model of Leadership, which emphasizes the importance of situational factors in determining leadership effectiveness. Fiedler's model posits that effective leadership depends not only on the leader's approach but also on the level of control the leader has over the situation. The research findings support this notion by highlighting the significance of e-leadership competencies in managing employee in the digital landscape. The study argues that model allows us to predict individual outcomes related to performance and well-being.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the implementation of e-leadership strategies may present challenges for leaders in higher learning institutions. The challenges could include resistance to change, technological barriers and the need for continuous learning and adaptation.

Overall, this study contributes to the understanding of e-leadership in the specific context of higher educational institutions in Malaysia and provides valuables insights for leaders seeking to enhance employee job performance in the digital era. By integrating the Fiedler's Contingency Theory, this research highlights the importance of situational factors and adapting leadership approaches to effectively manage employees in the ever-evolving digital landscape.

Recommendation for future research

Future research could focus on specific e-leadership competencies, such as digital communication skills, virtual team management or technology adoption. Investigating the impact of these competencies employee job performance would provide a more understanding of the specific skills and abilities that are most crucial for e-leadership.

Furthermore, the study should consider using qualitative approach by in depth interview to explore further on the issue. This study focused on the impact of e-leadership on employee job performance. Future research could explore the impact of e-leadership on employee well-being, such as job satisfaction, burnout and work-life balance. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the effects of e-leadership on employees in the digital age.

Another variable specifically higher public education institution can be further examined and studied with more respondents and wider reach of sampling is recommended to include more respondents from higher public education institution in Sabah and Sarawak.

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