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**THE INFLUENCE OF SALARY, WORKING ENVIRONMENT, AND WORKLOAD
ON ACADEMICIANS' JOB SATISFACTION**

BY

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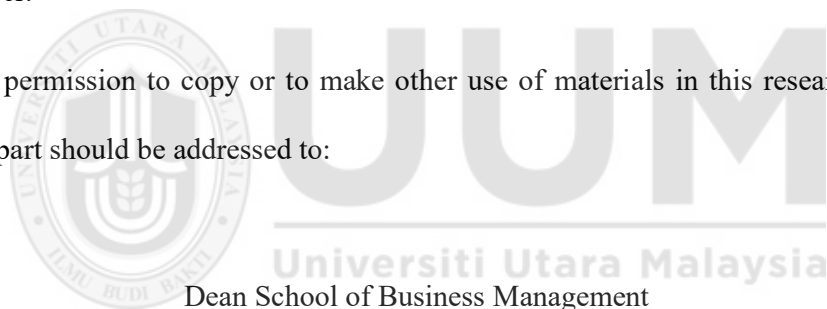
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ABSTRACT

This paper aims in analysing the influence of salary, working environment and workload towards academician's job satisfaction. The research attempt to examine the relationship between salary, working environment and workload with academician's job satisfaction. The study employs quantitative approach to investigate the hypothesis and identify the impact of salary, working environment and workload towards academician's job satisfaction. The study has been conducted among academicians and received 63 valid respondents in a private college located in Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia. Data were gathered by questionnaire survey and analysed by using SPSS. Findings reveal that there is a positive significant relationship on both salary and working environment towards academician's job satisfaction and it was discovered that workload is not significant in affecting academician's job satisfaction. The findings indicate that salary and working environment are seen as key factors, although workload does not appear to have a statistically significant effect on academic staff job satisfaction.

Keywords: Academicians job satisfaction, salary, working environment, workload.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh gaji, persekitaran kerja dan beban kerja terhadap kepuasan kerja ahli akademik. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji hubungan antara gaji, persekitaran kerja dan beban kerja dengan kepuasan kerja ahli akademik. Kajian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif untuk menyiasat hipotesis dan mengenal pasti impak gaji, persekitaran kerja dan beban kerja terhadap kepuasan kerja ahli akademik. Kajian ini telah dijalankan di kalangan ahli akademik dan menerima 63 responden yang sah di sebuah kolej swasta yang terletak di Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia. Data dikumpul melalui tinjauan soal selidik dan dianalisis menggunakan SPSS. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa terdapat hubungan positif yang signifikan bagi kedua-dua gaji dan persekitaran kerja terhadap kepuasan kerja ahli akademik dan didapati bahawa beban kerja tidak signifikan dalam mempengaruhi kepuasan kerja ahli akademik. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa gaji dan persekitaran kerja dilihat sebagai faktor utama, walaupun beban kerja tidak menunjukkan kesan yang signifikan secara statistik terhadap kepuasan kerja kakitangan akademik.

Kata Kunci: Kepuasan kerja ahli akademik, gaji, persekitaran kerja, beban kerja.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of study

Job satisfaction has been acknowledged for a long time as a key factor influencing critical organizational outcomes such as productivity, employee retention, and overall institutional effectiveness (Kinman, 2018). In the context of higher education, academic staff are considered as the main actor of an institution's ability to deliver high-quality teaching, produce significant research, and support student achievement. Understanding the elements that contribute to their job satisfaction is very important for sustaining excellence within universities (Zhou, 2021).

In Malaysia, universities can be generally categorized based on ownership, funding mechanisms, and academic focus. The two main types are public and private universities. Public universities, funded and overseen by the Malaysian government, offer a broad range of academic programs and are often recognized for their strong emphasis on research and national ranking performance (Wan, 2007). These institutions are further divided into three categories: research, comprehensive, and focused universities based on their primary missions and areas of specialization (Associates, 2023). On the other hand, private universities are owned and operated by private entities and are known for their adaptability, contemporary teaching methods, and close collaboration with industries. Many private institutions tailor their programs to meet labour market demands and frequently engage in international partnerships to improve academic quality (EasyUni, 2024).

Job satisfaction is rooted in the fulfilment of basic human needs and remains critical to organizational success (Worrell, 2004). In the academic sector, various factors must be considered to ensure the welfare of staff and the realization of institutional missions. Numerous studies have explored the determinants of job satisfaction, identifying elements such as autonomy in the workplace, leadership style, and working conditions as central to employees'

perceptions of their roles (Zainudin Awang, 2010). For academic staff specifically, satisfaction is not only about job roles but also about being empowered to positively influence student outcomes and contribute meaningfully to their field. Dedicated and skilled educators enhance institutional reputation, enrich student learning experiences, and elevate academic standards (de Lourdes Machado-Taylor, 2016).

Career commitment has been identified as a crucial element in fostering job satisfaction among academics. According to Gendron (2016), internal motivation plays a more significant role than external factors such as salary or workplace environment. However, external conditions should not be overlooked. Elements like workload, financial compensation, and opportunities for professional growth continue to have a measurable impact on job satisfaction (Cerci, 2019). The academic workload, in particular, has become an area of concern in recent studies, especially in terms of its effect on staff well-being and institutional performance.

In assessing satisfaction levels, studies have used various metrics, including salary, promotion opportunities, supervision, benefits, work environment, peer relationships, job nature, and communication. Findings have shown that academic staff generally report high levels of satisfaction when these factors align with their expectations (Juariyah, 2020). Moreover, job satisfaction is closely tied to how lecturers perceive their treatment in the workplace and the potential for future rewards. In other words, both tangible benefits like salary and intangible aspects such as recognition and career development opportunities contribute to overall satisfaction (Osifila, 2020). Mehrad (2014) further reinforces this by confirming a direct and significant relationship between income and job satisfaction among academic employees.

Despite their passion for teaching and research, academics worldwide have increasingly been resigning from their positions even those with permanent appointments. According to the Nature Careers Survey (2021), which gathered responses from over 3,200 academics globally,

most respondents expressed a love for their profession, yet overall job satisfaction had reached a historical low. Factors such as burnout, administrative burdens, discrimination, limited career progression, stagnant salaries, and job insecurity were cited as primary reasons behind this dissatisfaction.

1.2 Problem statement

The main goal of this study was to identify the factors that influence academician's job satisfaction. The issue of this study stems when a preliminary survey conducted among academicians at a higher private institution in 2024 revealed that 62% of respondents reported a decline in their overall job satisfaction compared to 2023. Although the current survey instrument lacks direct items to identify the specific causes of academicians' dissatisfaction, the observed result prompted this study to focus on three independent variables which are salary, work environment and workload. These variables were chosen based on empirical evidence from previous research.

Yunus and Dilou (2022) conducted an empirical survey examining the perceptions of remuneration between Malaysian public universities, revealing that the salary serves as a determinant pivot of work satisfaction. Their results suggest that when salary levels are perceived as proportional to the efforts and responsibilities of academic staff, work satisfaction tends to be higher. Next, institutional support plays a fundamental role in the configuration of job satisfaction among academics, which serves as a crucial component of the work environment that influences employee perceptions and experiences. Past research emphasizes that several dimensions of institutional support, including organizational policies, available resources and leadership styles significantly affect job satisfaction (Mascarenhas et al., 2022; Mahzan, 2021). Liu et al. (2021) show that an excessive workload and the demand for academic productivity can invade personal life, leading to the reduction of satisfaction.

Job satisfaction among academics is a critical research area due to its deep implications for both educational results and the general performance of academic institutions. A high level of job satisfaction can lead to an increase in academic participation, greater effectiveness of teaching and an improvement in student learning experiences (Abdul Halim et al., 2021). In contrast, dissatisfaction can result in higher rotation rates, decrease in institutional loyalty and a negative impact on academic climate (Liu et al., 2023). As educators shape the intellectual development of future generations, understanding the factors that contribute to their job satisfaction becomes essential not only for individual well-being but also for the sustained success of educational organizations.

Several key elements have been identified as influential in the configuration of job satisfaction among academics. One of the core factors influencing job satisfaction is salary or financial compensation. According to Fung et al. (2024), salaries were shown to be one of the main causes of academicians' dissatisfaction because many respondents felt that their salary did not match their workload, expertise, and credentials. Mehrad (2014) highlight a direct and significant relationship between income and job satisfaction. Remuneration remains a central pillar in determining how employees perceive their value within an organization (Judge, 2010).

In the context of Malaysian higher education, both public and private institutions face mounting pressure to offer competitive salary packages that reflect the qualifications, experience, and contributions of their academic staff (Wen, 2025). Many studies have shown that dissatisfaction with regard to salary is not only in correlation with a decrease in work satisfaction, but also leads to higher renewal intentions among academicians (Mat Rifin & Danaee, 2022). According to Nordin (2009), salary is among the most influential variables affecting lecturers' satisfaction, as it is closely tied to perceptions of fairness, self-worth, and professional recognition. Tang (2012) further argues that financial satisfaction is often

positively correlated with access to professional development opportunities, pathways for promotion, and a sense of being valued by the organization factors which collectively shape the overall job satisfaction experience of faculty members. This suggests that salary is not merely about monetary reward, but also about what it symbolizes in terms of respect, equity, and satisfaction.

The work environment is equally important and encompasses multiple aspects, including physical infrastructure, access to resources, leadership styles, interpersonal relationships, and the broader institutional culture (Oludeyi, 2015). Institutional support, which covers the resources provided by the University, plays a fundamental role in promoting a good work environment. Access to facilities, administrative support and recognition of academic achievements are critical aspects that help the members of the faculty feel valued and supported by their academic activities (Abdul Halim et al., 2021). Liu et al. (2023) found that intrinsic and extrinsic rewards related to institutional support are significantly correlated with job satisfaction levels, which suggests that when institutions actively participate in offering comprehensive support structures, they can positively influence the satisfaction of academicians. A conducive and supportive working environment has the potential to foster positive attitudes among staff, encourage innovation and collaboration, and enhance job satisfaction. In contrast, a toxic or poorly managed work environment can increase job-related stress, lower morale, and accelerate turnover intentions (Friedman, 2021).

Lack of freedom, poor peer support, or unfavourable working environment may all lead to lower job satisfaction. In the academic context, work circumstances, leadership style, and autonomy are some of the most important elements influencing job satisfaction (Awang, 2010). Increasing academic workloads had resulting to an adverse effect on employees' job

satisfaction. According to recent studies, workload has become a bigger issue because of its effects on staff wellbeing and institutional effectiveness (Winefield, 2008).

These pressures are not merely administrative inconveniences they encompass a complex range of responsibilities including increased teaching loads, extended working hours, grading and marking tasks, student mentoring and supervision, administrative reporting duties, and research output requirements (Osifila, 2020). Over time, such workload intensification has been shown to significantly undermine job satisfaction, contributing to stress, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and declining productivity (Imondi, 2011). According to Hill (2023), in her critical piece titled *Academics are unhappy: It's time to transform our troubled university system*, many lecturers across higher education institutions report feeling overwhelmed by excessive bureaucratic obligations, a lack of autonomy, and unrealistic performance expectations.

Although a growing body of literature has explored factors such as workload, salary, and working environment, the interrelationships among these variables remain underexamined especially within the context of private higher education institutions in Malaysia (Wang, 2025). This statement had been supported by past study where Ismail (2015) noted that researchers tend to focus on one variable at a time or examine the public university setting, leaving a gap in understanding how these dimensions collectively influence the job satisfaction of academicians. Therefore, this study aims to bridge that gap by investigating how salary, workload, and the working environment simultaneously impact job satisfaction among academic staff at a selected private higher education institution in Malaysia. Insights derived from this research are expected to offer practical recommendations for policy formulation, improve faculty retention strategies, and contribute to the broader discourse on sustainable academic work environments in the Malaysian higher education sector.

1.3 Research questions

The purpose of this study is to analyse the relationship between the Job satisfaction with work salary, workloads, and working environment. This study's research aims and research questions are in line with one another. The following research questions, when answered, will help the study achieve its goal. The purpose of the research can be achieved throughout the following research questions as follows:

- I. Does salary influence job satisfaction of academic staff?
- II. Does working environment influence job satisfaction of academic staff?
- III. Does workload influence job satisfaction of academic staff?

1.4 Research objectives

- I. To determine the effect of salary on the job satisfaction of academic staff.
- II. To examine the influence of the working environment on the job satisfaction of academic staff.
- III. To investigate the relationship between workload and job satisfaction among academic staff.

1.5 Scope of study

This research investigates the job satisfaction of academic staff at a private college located in Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia because private universities are becoming more and more significant in Malaysia's tertiary education system. In a semi-urban context, this study offers localized insights into the daily realities of academic staff. Compared to public universities, private colleges may function under different organizational structures, financial limitations, and management philosophies. There is a gap on the particular difficulties faced by academic staff in smaller regional colleges because the majority of Malaysia's current research tends to concentrate on public universities or private institutions located in urban areas.

The study focuses specifically on the relationship between employee satisfaction and the following key factors: salary, working environment, and career advancement opportunities. These elements have been widely recognized in existing literature as critical determinants of job satisfaction, particularly within the context of higher education. These statements had been proved by past studies. In higher education, salary has a direct impact on how academic staff members view their worth, equity, and motivation, particularly in private institutions where pay ranges can vary greatly (Toker, 2011). Leither (2015) had stated that academic staff job satisfaction in higher education is greatly influenced by the mental and psychological aspects of the workplace, including stress levels, interpersonal support, role clarity, and perceived justice. Finally, workload however also influence academic staff working satisfactions. Employees may not have the time or energy to take advantage of growth opportunities if they are already overburdened with mundane work, which could lead to frustration and increase job dissatisfaction.

The scope is further restricted to the perspectives of full-time academic staff, excluding part-time lecturers, administrative personnel, or non-academic employees. This scope was selected to guarantee uniformity in job descriptions, standards, and institutional involvement. The wide range of duties that full-time academicians usually have, such as teaching, research, student supervision, and administrative duties, allows them to engage with the institution more deeply and consistently. Part-time academics, on the other hand, could not be as involved in these areas and frequently work under different employment terms, which causes a major difference in their experiences and views of job satisfaction. Similarly, administrative and non-academic employees carry out tasks outside of their primary academic responsibilities and are impacted by other organizational elements. The academic workforce in private higher education institutions is more accurately and specifically represented when the scope is limited to full-time academic staff.

1.6 Significance of study

This research provides valuable insights for human resource practitioners, enabling them to better understand the factors that influence job satisfaction among academic staff. By identifying key elements such as salary, working environment, and workloads, this study help improve policies and practices that enhance the well-being and job satisfaction of academicians. The findings instrumented for decision-makers in human resource departments, offering evidence-based strategies to increase job satisfaction.

In the fields of education studies and human resource management, academicians' job satisfaction has grown in importance. Academicians, the backbone of higher education institutions, are essential to provide high-quality instruction, carrying out significant research, and advancing the institutions. In addition to their professional dedication and personal well-being, their job satisfaction has an impact on student outcomes as it will influence the quality of students that engage with them. Job satisfaction is positively associated with their motivation, teaching effectiveness, and commitment to student development, which in turn influences the overall quality of student learning and academic performance.

Furthermore, the results of this research could serve as a foundation for further studies into faculty satisfaction, providing a broader framework for educational institutions seeking to attract and retain top academic talent. In a time of increased demands, scarce resources, and changing academic duties, it is critical to comprehend the factors that influence academicians' job satisfaction. Ultimately, by improving job satisfaction, universities and colleges can produce more motivated, engaged, and high-performing academic staff, contributing to the overall growth and success of higher education institutions.

1.7 Definition of key terms

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is defined as how individuals feel about their jobs and all of its facets, serving as a measure of how well their expectations align with actual experiences. It reflects an individual's overall attitude toward their job, encompassing both intrinsic elements such as the nature of the work itself and personal achievement and extrinsic factors like relationships with colleagues, salary, and professional development opportunities (Somashekher, 2021).

Salary

Salary refers to the fixed, regular payment made by an employer to an employee in exchange for the performance of assigned job responsibilities. It is typically paid on a monthly or biweekly basis and constitutes a fundamental aspect of an employee's compensation (Milkovich, 2014).

Working Environment

The working environment is defined as the setting, circumstances, and surroundings in which individuals operate. It includes the physical, social, and psychological conditions that shape how employees carry out their responsibilities. A conducive working environment plays a crucial role in supporting employee well-being, motivation, and overall productivity, thereby directly impacting their performance and job satisfaction (Oludeyi, 2015).

Workload

Workload refers to the demands required to complete a task within a specified timeframe and an individual's capacity to meet those demands. It includes both the quantitative aspect, such as the number of tasks, and the qualitative aspect, including task complexity and intensity (Van den Berg, 2013).

1.8 Organization of the study

Chapter 1 introduces the background of the study, providing an overview of job satisfaction and the factors influencing it, such as working conditions, workload, and salary. It includes the problem statement, which outlines the specific issue being addressed, and the research questions that guide the investigation. The objectives of the study are also stated, followed by a description of the study's scope. The significance of the study highlights its potential contributions to human resource management and higher education practices.

Chapter 2 presents a review of the relevant literature, focusing on existing theories and empirical studies related to job satisfaction. It explains conceptual frameworks and previous research findings concerning the influence of salary, workload, and working environment on employee satisfaction. This chapter also identifies gaps in the literature that the current study aims to address.

Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, detailing the research design, population and sample, data collection procedures, and the research instrument (questionnaire). It also explains the techniques used for data analysis, including both descriptive and inferential statistical methods, and discusses the validity and reliability of the instrument used.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. It includes a descriptive analysis of the demographic profile of respondents, as well as the main findings based on the research questions. The data is analyzed using appropriate statistical tools, and the relationships between the variable's salary, workload, working environment, and job satisfaction are interpreted.

Chapter 5 discusses the research findings. It provides interpretation and justification of the results, highlighting key insights and implications. This chapter also outlines the limitations encountered during the research and suggests directions for future studies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter's first section will examine the study's appropriate literature. First, the core theory of the study is presented in this study. It will then go into further detail about the study's variables, such as academicians job satisfaction, salary, working environment and workload at work. This chapter also covers the construction of hypothesis that demonstrate the relationships between the dependent variable (job satisfaction) and the identified independent factors (salary, working environment and workload). The framework for study is introduced in the last section at the end of the chapter.

2.2 Definition and Conceptualization of Variables

2.2.1 Job Satisfaction

Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. Supporting this view, Spector (1997) noted that job satisfaction refers to the degree to which individuals feel positively or negatively about their jobs and the various facets associated with them. Job satisfaction appears as a critical psychological construction which influences not only the individual well-being of employees, but also organizational productivity and commitment (Alshurideh et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2022). This complexity is underlined by various dimensions which contribute to work satisfaction, which can be largely classified as intrinsic and extrinsic factors.

The term intrinsic job nature of the work itself, such as opportunities for personal growth, autonomy, meaningfulness of tasks, and the sense of achievement employees experience. In contrast, extrinsic job satisfaction is associated with external aspects of the job, including salary, benefits, working conditions, promotion opportunities, and job security (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959; Locke, 1976). More recent literature continues to adopt this

framework, noting that sustainable job satisfaction arises from the effective integration of both intrinsic and extrinsic elements, as each plays a distinct yet complementary role in shaping employees' overall work attitudes (Aziri, 2011; Judge et al., 2017). In the Malaysian context, research in polytechnics found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation positively influence academic job satisfaction (Omar et al., 2023).

According to Lee et al. (2022), intrinsic motivations, including the intellectual challenge posed by professional responsibilities and alignment of work with personal values, play a central role in promoting work satisfaction. Employees who find their work significant and enjoy an element of creativity are likely to report higher levels of satisfaction. This intrinsic aspect of work satisfaction is often linked to concepts such as objective and commitment, which have proven to lead not only individual performance but also a global motivation within the teams. In addition, social relations at work, including the quality of communication and collaboration with colleagues, also considerably affects work satisfaction. Positive interpersonal relationships can promote a favourable work environment, leading to improved morale of employees and satisfaction to the organization (Aljumah, 2023). Effective leadership, characterized by transformational and supporting behaviors, promotes an environment in which employees feel valued and trained (Aljumah, 2023). Transformational leaders, in particular, inspire and motivate team members, improving their intrinsic motivation and a sense of general realization in their roles. On the contrary, autocratic leadership styles can lead to employee disagreement and lesser satisfaction at work, highlighting the importance of leading leadership approach in cultivating a positive work environment.

On the other hand, extrinsic factors such as salary, social benefits, balance between professional and private life and the quality of labour relationships also significantly influence work satisfaction. Competitive remuneration packages and additional advantages, such as health and

retirement insurance plans, serve as fundamental components that can affect employee satisfaction levels (Aljumah, 2023). However, although extrinsic awards are undoubtedly important, the emphasis on these factors increases discussions on their long-term effectiveness in maintaining employee satisfaction. Alshurideh et al. (2023) point out that when employees perceive their extrinsic awards as inadequate or unequal compared to peers, dissatisfaction can occur, leading to higher rolling intentions.

Within academic institutions, job satisfaction is influenced by factors unique to the academic profession, such as capability in teaching, research opportunities, collegial support, and administrative assistance. Oshagbemi (2000) found that satisfaction among academicians is largely derived from the intellectual challenges of their roles and the opportunity for academic engagement. Conversely, factors such as excessive teaching loads, administrative barriers, and insufficient research funding may lead to dissatisfaction. Rosser (2004) underscores the importance of institutional support and recognition in enhancing faculty job satisfaction, noting that when academic staff feel valued, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to their roles.

Empirical studies consistently highlight job satisfaction as a critical determinant of academic productivity and commitment within higher education, influencing both individual well-being and institutional performance (Oliveira et al., 2022). According to Parasuraman (2001), the favourable emotions employees experience at work are what is considered as job satisfaction, while Locke (1976) describes it as an individual's cognitive, emotional, and evaluative response toward their work. Locke also notes that satisfaction may be gained when employees enjoy achieving success in their roles. It was supported by Amburgey (2005) who defined job satisfaction as a measure of an employee's sense of fulfilment in their responsibility. Similarly, Bushra (2011) describes it as the extent to which an employee feels satisfied, content or happy

with their work. Belias (2014) adds that it is a pleasant and positive feeling obtained from one's professional performance. These definitions highlight that job satisfaction surpasses emotional unimportant level because it captures the psychological experience of employees at work. Supporting the statement Parasuraman (2001) noting that, the favourable emotions employees experience at work are what is considered as job satisfaction.

In summary, the dimensions of work satisfaction are multifaceted, combining intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Bloomfield (2014) highlights that job satisfaction is affected by a combination of internal factors such as personality and values with external factors for example workload and leadership). The interaction of significant labour, remuneration, balance between professional and privacy and social relationships creates a complex landscape that organizations must navigate to improve employee satisfaction. Bakotic (2013) supports this view, emphasizing that elements such as job type, compensation, stress levels, work environment, managerial support, interpersonal relationships, and working hours all play a role in influencing an employee's level of satisfaction. Given this complexity, job satisfaction is often viewed as a holistic and dynamic psychological state. Job satisfaction is a crucial element of organizational behaviour, serving as a significant predictor of various vital results in the workplace such as employee morale, productivity and retention rates. Recent studies highlight the correlation between work satisfaction and employee performance, establishing that higher work satisfaction levels generally lead to better performance results (Kuruppu et al., 2022; Sudibjo & Manihuruk, 2022).

The Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) provides a relational lens to understand job satisfaction. In this theory, it proposes that employees develop positive attitudes, including satisfaction and organizational commitment, when they acknowledge reciprocal support and fair treatment from their employer. In this sense, satisfaction is not only a reaction to job tasks

or compensation but also a reflection of the quality of the social and psychological exchange between employees and the organization. It was supported by other theoretical frameworks such as the theory of the two factors of Herzberg where its provide a robust lens through which to understand the interconnection of these elements. This model postulates that factors contributing to work satisfaction (motivations) and dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) must be understood as distinct but interdependent constructions. While motivations such as success and recognition promote satisfaction, hygiene factors - including salary, working conditions and business policies - must be adequately discussed to prevent dissatisfaction (Alshurideh et al., 2023). However, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (1943) offers another perspective, suggesting that employees experience job satisfaction when their needs ranging from basic safety to self-actualization are fulfilled within the workplace. At the foundational level, employees must feel physically and psychologically secured. Beyond that, they seek belonging, esteem, and opportunities to realize their full potential. When these needs are met, satisfaction is likely to increase. A recent study by Amayreh and Arshad (2025) explored how integrating Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs with Self-Determination Theory can enhance job satisfaction among educators in Jordan's public schools. The study emphasizes that perceived organizational support plays a crucial moderating role in the relationship between various job satisfaction factors and academicians' experiences.

Plus, job satisfaction is also closely linked to the broader institutional culture and governance structure. The presence of participatory decision-making processes, transparent evaluation criteria, and equitable workload distribution contributes positively to faculty morale and satisfaction (Johnsrud & Rosser, 2002). When lecturers are involved in curriculum design, policy development, or departmental planning, they tend to feel a greater sense of ownership and alignment with institutional goals. Furthermore, opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and access to academic resources such as research grants, libraries, and training

further enhance satisfaction levels (Baldwin, Luncford, & Vanderlinden, 2005). Additionally, mentorship programs and continuous professional development initiatives have been identified as critical for fostering a sense of growth and support among junior faculty members, which in turn boosts their engagement and job satisfaction (Knight & Trowler, 2001). In contexts where job security is a concern, such as in contract-based academic appointments, the lack of tenure opportunities can also diminish satisfaction, highlighting the importance of long-term career pathways within higher education settings.

Overall, the concept of job satisfaction is multifaceted and context-dependent. It is shaped by a broad array of personal, job-related, and organizational factors (Atre, 2023). When job satisfaction is fostered, it can lead to numerous positive outcomes, including higher morale, stronger organizational commitment, increased productivity, and lower turnover (Zajac, 1990). As such, understanding and enhancing job satisfaction should be a strategic priority for all organizations, especially those in the education sector where motivation, retention, and performance are closely tied to how valued and fulfilled employees feel in their professional roles.

2.2.2 Salary

Salary refers to the fixed payment provided by an employer to an employee, typically on a monthly or annual basis, in exchange for the performance and services of designated job duties. As a fundamental component of compensation, salary plays a pivotal role in attracting, motivating, and retaining employees (Milkovich & Newman, 2014). Beyond its financial function, salary serves as one of the most immediate and visible forms of recognition, shaping employees' perceptions of fairness, appreciation, and value within an organization. This statement had been supported by Armstrong (2020) noting that salary is the financial remuneration agreed upon between employer and employee, reflecting the value of the job and the employee's contribution, usually paid periodically.

The importance of salary extends beyond mere economic necessity. According to Rynes (2004), salary reflects an organization's acknowledgment of employee performance and achievements. When employees place significant value on their pay and receive raises aligned with their expectations, they tend to experience greater job satisfaction (Tang, 2004). studies have shown that employees report greater work satisfaction when their salaries reflect their skills and efforts, strengthening the fundamental notion according to which an equitable remuneration is directly related to satisfaction in the workplace (Miklosevic et al., 2022). The results highlight that employee who feel underestimated or underestimated are more likely to experience a reduction in professional satisfaction, causing the intentions of turnover and challenges relating to the conservation of talents (Gipson et al., 2020). For many individuals, money functions not only as a tool for meeting personal and familial obligations but also as a source of motivation and self-worth. A study by Malik (2010) revealed a strong correlation between salary and organizational commitment, suggesting that financial compensation, alongside factors like co-worker relationships, supervisory quality, and promotional opportunities, is integral to employee well-being.

The impact of net monthly salary on job satisfaction is especially noteworthy. Ghafoor (2012) found that as employee salaries increase, satisfaction levels also tend to rise, particularly when pay is perceived as commensurate with job responsibilities and performance. Similarly, Du Plessis et al. (2016) emphasize that salary is a vital factor in ensuring workforce stability and engagement. Organizations consistently utilize pay as a mechanism to attract new talent, retain existing employees, and drive motivation (Teck-Hong, 2011). Employees often view salary as a benchmark or "scorecard" to assess how much their contributions are valued by the employer (Robbins, 2001). In some cases, workers prioritize income to such an extent that they perceive it as the most important life goal, leading to a continual desire for higher pay (Teck-Hong, 2011).

The role of salary in job satisfaction is further supported by motivational theories. According to Adams' Equity Theory (1963), employees continuously evaluate the fairness of their compensation by comparing their inputs such as effort, experience, and skills with the outcomes for example salary, benefits, recognition received. If employees perceive that other with similar inputs receive higher compensation, they may feel a sense of injustice, resulting in dissatisfaction and disengagement. Such perceptions may lead to reduced performance, absenteeism, or even turnover. Vroom's Expectancy Theory (1964) also offers valuable insight into the motivational role of salary. The theory posits that individuals are more likely to exert effort when they believe that their performance will lead to a desirable reward, such as a pay increase. When a transparent link exists between effort and financial reward, employees are more likely to be productive and goal-oriented. Conversely, a weak or absent link between performance and compensation can lead to demotivation and reduced job satisfaction.

The symbolic value of salary cannot be overlooked. Robbins (2001) notes that employees often view their pay as a reflection of their status and importance within the organization. This view influences how people assess their status and value in the workplace. When there is a misalignment between perceived contribution and actual pay, it may lead to a psychological disconnect, affecting engagement and loyalty. Cognitive disconnection can result from a discrepancy between what workers feel they deserve and what they actually make, which can lower motivation and cause job dissatisfaction. Teck-Hong (2011) further explains that dissatisfaction with income may stem from persistent financial insufficiency, especially among employees for whom salary is the central focus of career success. Because of this, pay is not just a functional requirement but also a key factor in determining job happiness.

Despite its importance, salary alone does not guarantee job satisfaction. Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) classifies salary as a hygiene factor essential to prevent dissatisfaction but

insufficient to create long-term satisfaction by itself. While inadequate or unfair pay can lead to frustration and disengagement, competitive pay must be complemented by motivators such as recognition, opportunities for advancement, meaningful work, and supportive leadership to produce genuine job satisfaction.

In the context of higher education, especially among academicians, the role of salary takes on nuanced significance. While many faculty members are driven by intrinsic motivators such as the pursuit of knowledge, research, and student mentorship are equitable and competitive compensation remains crucial for maintaining morale and academic excellence (Masum, 2015). Barrett and Barrett (2008) observed that dissatisfaction with pay is particularly acute when teaching responsibilities intensify without corresponding salary adjustments. This can lead to reduced motivation, burnout, and attrition. Given the rising expectations placed on lecturers and researchers, fair and transparent compensation systems are essential for retaining academic talent, particularly in the face of private sector or international competition.

Academic staff may also weigh their salary satisfaction against external benchmarks, comparing public and private institutions or even regional and global standards (Khalid, 2012). If discrepancies are too wide, it may result in brain drain or a diminished commitment to institutional goals. Moreover, salary compression where junior staff are paid nearly as much as senior staff due to stagnant pay progression can cause dissatisfaction among experienced faculty members, highlighting the need for structured and equitable salary progression models within academic institutions.

In conclusion, salary plays a multifaceted and critical role in shaping job satisfaction. It influences employees' perceptions of fairness, motivation, security, and organizational commitment. While it is not the sole driver of job satisfaction, its significance cannot be underestimated particularly in professions, like academia, where both intrinsic and extrinsic

rewards must be balanced. A well-designed, transparent, and fair salary structure is essential not only for employee contentment but also for fostering a productive and committed workforce.

2.2.3 Work Environment

The working environment refers to the combination of physical conditions, social atmosphere, and organizational culture in which employees perform their job duties (Ivancevich, 1998). Existing literature describes work satisfaction as a critical determinant of motivation and efficiency in academic circles. It has been argued that a supporting work environment favours a feeling of belonging and validation among the members of the faculty, therefore improving their professional commitment and their productivity (Tella, 2007). According to MGAIWA (2021), a positive work environment characterized by recognition, mentoring and adequate resources contribute considerably to the levels of work satisfaction of academics. This assertion highlights the importance of institutional support, which can manifest itself through tangible resources, such as financing for research initiatives, and intangible factors, such as a college atmosphere conducive to collaboration and professional growth.

Work environment refers to the conditions, circumstances, and surroundings in which individuals are employed (Oludeyi, 2015). Academic staff job performance is significantly connected with their working conditions (Yee, 2018). The term "work environment" refers to two elements: job characteristics, which explain how a worker's duties affect significant psychological states, and work setting, which relate to the attributes of the workplace environment (Wright, 2003). Their research emphasizes the critical roles that elements like proper lighting, ventilation, organizational fairness, and leadership transparency have in determining how satisfied workers are with their jobs overall.

In context of work setting, the impact of resource availability and technology infrastructure on the academic work environment (Awan, 2015). Simultaneously, the security of the working environment is vital in order to prevent risks to the life or health of employees as well as accidents, injuries, and occupational illnesses (Bakotic, 2013).

However, in an organization's emotional climate, which is influenced by interpersonal interactions and leadership conduct, directly and quantifiably affects academic job satisfaction (Tsai, 2011). Workers are more likely to feel appreciated, inspired, and dedicated to their company when they have positive emotional encounters with superiors and co-workers. Job satisfaction is greatly increased by a positive work environment, which includes physical comfort, encouraging co-workers, autonomy, and good communication (Amin, 2013). Oubibi et al. (2022) Deepen the implications of organizational support perceived in professional satisfaction. Their findings indicate that when the members of the Faculty feel supported by their institution, not only improve their job satisfaction, but also positively correlates with their professional aspirations. According to Raziq and Maulabakhsh (2015), a positive work environment boosts employee satisfaction by lowering stress, boosting output, and encouraging loyalty to the company.

Plus, Spector (1997) stated that, psychological safety, fairness, and respect in the job all support emotional stability and commitment. Institutions boost morale and lower turnover overall increase job satisfaction when they encourage teamwork and acknowledge individual contributions (Bakotić & Babić, 2013; Koustelios, 2001). It demonstrated how job satisfaction is impacted by the working environment. Regardless of the kinds of schools, institutions, or demographics, a positive work environment affects academic staff members' job satisfaction (Anastasiou, 2014). Job satisfaction can be negatively impacted by limited access to research

funds, instructional resources, and dependable internet connectivity, especially in institutions with inadequate funding.

Job satisfaction and working environment can contribute to the influence of emotional well-being through work engagement. Empowerment and emotional engagement are crucial elements of a positive workplace culture. Employees are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs and have a reduced turnover rate when they feel emotionally invested in their work and see sincere support from their organizations (Kanter, 1993). This viewpoint is especially pertinent in academic contexts, where teaching duties, student interactions, and research demands frequently cause teachers to experience emotional distress. Engagement is fostered in a work atmosphere that encourages emotional positivity, which raises satisfaction and productivity. On the other side, burnout is known to be predicted by emotional tiredness that results from toxic or unsupportive situations. Higher levels of engagement at work result in increased job satisfaction and organizational success, and positive emotions at work help to foster these levels (Bakker, 2008).

2.2.4 Workload

Workload is referred as the amount of work that an employee is required to complete during a specific time period (McLaren, 2021). It includes both qualitative and quantitative elements, such as the complexity, pressure, and mental strain of the duties, as well as the quantity of tasks or hours completed. In the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, workload is categorized as a job requirement that entails consistent mental or physical effort and is linked to specific psychological and physiological expenses (Bakker, 2007). According to past studies, workers are more likely to stay motivated and dedicated to organizational objectives when they feel that their task is reasonable and doable which overall resulting in job satisfaction. Overwork is commonly associated with stress, burnout, and lower levels of satisfaction, whereas a manageable workload tends to increase engagement and productivity (Spector, 1997).

Excessive workload has been consistently linked to occupational stress and reduced job satisfaction (Ahsan, 2009).

In higher education, lecturer role pressure and work–family conflict stemming from heavy workloads lead to stress, burnout, and deteriorating job satisfaction. In academic context, workload refers to the range of duties, including teaching, research, and service, that staff are required to undertake, often without clear limits or sufficient support (Gillespie, 2001). Academic workload has significantly increased due to growing student numbers, administrative responsibilities, and expectations for research production (Kinman, 2013). The research emphasized that intensification of academic labor without corresponding institutional support leads to dissatisfaction and a growing intention to leave the profession. Perceived overload can lead to withdrawal behaviors in academic staff (Schaufeli, 2004).

In higher education, lecturer role pressure stemming from heavy workloads lead to stress, burnout, and deteriorating job satisfaction (Kim, 2024). The tension that exist due to excessive workload had been proven by past studies. Researchers at private institutions in China discovered that academic job satisfaction is greatly lowered by having too many tasks (Li , 2025). In Malaysia’s Kolej Poly-Tech MARA, heavy workload correlated moderately and negatively with job performance, indirectly lowering job satisfaction (Zamri et al., 2024). Heavy workloads cause educators to experience increased levels of stress and burnout, which has a detrimental influence on their effectiveness as teachers and job satisfaction (Zhang, 2020).

Academic staff frequently deal with hidden workloads, including unacknowledged administrative duties and emotional labour (Misra, 2012). They put in a lot of unseen effort in the areas of informal mentorship, diversity work, and emotional support showing that this work is crucial but usually unappreciated and unpaid (Griffin, 2013). These kinds of burdens had

indirectly increased the dissatisfaction of academicians. A substantial amount of the psychological and emotional assistance that lecturers give goes undetected and unsupported, which leads to burnout and job dissatisfaction, especially in institutions with a high teaching workload (Kinman, 2013). Despite having a foundation in institutional ideals, these demands might eventually become difficult, especially if they are not taken into consideration in workload or promotion models (Guarino, 2017).

Another key point of workload that had been highlighted in past studies is role conflict and ambiguity in academia. Internal role conflict and job dissatisfaction might result from the frequent misalignment of the simultaneous demands of teaching, research, and service (Barkhuizen, 2014). The effects of workload might be exacerbated by role ambiguity. Even mundane chores turn become pressures when employees are unclear about priorities or performance evaluation criteria. This perplexity lowers morale and diminishes the perceived equity of labour distribution (Gillespie, 2001).

2.2.5 Hypothesis Development

2.2.5.1 Relationship Between Salary and Job Satisfaction

The influence of salary on job satisfaction among academic staff can be examined closely through the lens of social exchange theory. This theory suggests that job satisfaction comes from the perceived rewards of a job, which covers several tangible and intangible benefits, including salary. In the context of the higher education, when academic personnel perceive their compensation as adequate in relation to their contributions, their satisfaction and intention to remain in their positions tend to increase (Mather, 2025). This perception of adequate remuneration acts as a fundamental aspect of social exchange between the institution and academic staff, where salary is a key component of what is perceived as a fair exchange for its commitment and efforts.

Zainudin Awang (2010) asserts that academicians' perceptions of justice and organizational support are directly impacted by their salary, making it a crucial factor in job satisfaction. Academics are more likely to be dedicated, effective, and content in their positions when they believe that their pay is commensurate with their workload, credentials, and contributions. On the other hand, inadequate or unfair salary structures can result in low morale, dissatisfaction, and even higher turnover rates especially in private universities where pay disparities are frequently more noticeable.

Empirical research supports the statement that higher wages can generate positive feelings about the work of one, thus improving general labor satisfaction. El-Sahory et al. (2022) found a significant correlation between salary levels and job satisfaction among academic staff, indicating that as salary increases, job satisfaction also does. However, it is essential to recognize the limitations of salary as a lonely motivator within this framework. Although monetary compensation is undeniably important, the social exchanges that define the academic environment are complex and multifaceted. Factors such as collegial support, tutoring opportunities, recognition of academic achievements and institutional commitments contribute significantly to the general labour satisfaction of academic staff (Pertiwi and Supartha, 2021).

In addition to social exchange theory, Herzberg's theory of two factors also provides information about the role of salary to influence job satisfaction. According to this theory, the factors that contribute to job satisfaction (motivating) and those that lead to job dissatisfaction (hygiene factors) are different. The salary is often classified as a hygiene factor. Inadequate or perceived unfair compensation can lead to job dissatisfaction. However, it does not necessarily improve job satisfaction when adequate. Herzberg postulates that to truly motivate employees, factors such as the achievement, recognition and nature of work in itself must be addressed

(Herzberg, 1966). In this sense, salary can function as a threshold factor, ensuring that academic staff feels reasonably compensated, but it is not enough to promote greater job satisfaction.

However, it is imperative to contextualize the salary in a broader framework of determinants of work satisfaction. The theory of social exchange postulates that the perceptions of the employees of equity and equity in their compensation create a reciprocal relationship between the institution and the academic staff (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). When salary levels are deemed correct, employees tend to present higher levels of work satisfaction and organizational engagement. Conversely, when compensation is perceived as inequitable, relational dynamics change, often resulting in a decrease in work satisfaction and an increase in renewal intentions (O'Neill et al., 2024). Based on the literature reviewed above, which highlights the significant influence of salary on job satisfaction, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Salary has a significant positive effect on the job satisfaction of academic staff.

2.2.5.2 Relationship Between Work Environment and Job Satisfaction

In numerous industries, including educational institutions, the workplace has a significant impact on job satisfaction. Physical circumstances, interpersonal interactions, administrative support, independence, resources, and organizational culture are all components of a productive workplace (Amin, 2013). Academicians are especially sensitive to the quality of their work environment because they frequently do mentally challenging jobs. Higher levels of motivation, better pleasure, and improved performance are all influenced by a supportive and positive work environment (Kinman, 2013). The concept of a place of support is complex linked to the theory of social exchange (SET), which suggesting that relations are built on reciprocal exchanges and confidence (Allen and Wright, 2016). This theory plays a vital role in understanding work satisfaction among academic staff in educational establishments.

Central to set is the idea that when employees receive high levels of support from their organization, they are more likely to go to increased satisfaction and commitment to work.

Psychological concerns are one of the working environment elements. Emotional stability and job satisfaction are supported in a workplace that values autonomy, respect, open communication, and justice. Faculty members are more likely to express better levels of dedication and satisfaction when they feel appreciated and their opinions are taken into consideration (Spector, 1997). Plus, they are particularly sensitive to psychosocial support structures, noting that environments promoting emotional well-being and mutual respect help.

Additionally, healthy working connections at work, such as supportive colleagues and competent leadership, are also essential elements of a productive workplace. Collaboration, conflict reduction, and a sense of belonging are all enhanced when professors and administrative personnel have mutual trust (Koustelios, 2001). Organizations that foster an open and transparent culture typically witness increased employee work satisfaction. Ali and Anwar (2021) contributed to the discourse on employee motivation, identifying his direct influence on the levels of work satisfaction. They applied that when employees feel motivated by their organizational environment, this promotes a reciprocal relationship that improves their satisfaction and their performance. Likewise, Rizal et al. (2024) examined the interconnections between the qualities of leadership and the performance of teachers, saying that work satisfaction serves as a crucial mediator in this relationship. Their results suggest that effective leadership, characterized by support and encouragement, can considerably improve the performance of the faculty.

Academic staffs frequently face psychological issues such stress, anxiety, emotional weariness, and lack of appreciation in addition to pressure to fulfil teaching, research, and administrative demands. As for that, they are more likely to feel committed and satisfied when they believe

that their organization recognizes and addresses psychological pressures (Kahya, 2007). On the other hand, psychologically unsafe feelings might result in burnout, withdrawal symptoms, and job dissatisfaction (Maslach, 1997). In conclusion, the components of a supporting workplace, as described by the theory of social exchange, are essential to influence work satisfaction among academic staff in educational establishments. The literature continuously emphasizes the importance of promoting good environments ultimately leading to greater satisfaction and commitment of academicians. As for that, drawing from the literature discussed, the second hypothesis is:

H2: Work environment has a significant positive effect on the job satisfaction of academic staff

2.2.5.3 Relationship Between Workload and Job Satisfaction

One important organizational component that has a direct bearing on workers' job satisfaction is workload. Additionally, Akob (2016) found a substantial association between manageable workload, ethical work commitment, and job satisfaction, indicating that academic achievement is closely related to how workload is structured and perceived. Academicians are more prone to burnout and job discontent when they are overworked and receive no assistance or flexibility in return.

Understanding the relationship between workload and job satisfaction among academics is fundamental, particularly as higher education institutions face the growing demands imposed on their faculty. Literature in this field reveals a complex interaction of factors, which include stress, balance between work and life and institutional support, which significantly form the general experiences of academic professionals (Smith, 2023). Numerous studies highlight the impact of the workload on job satisfaction, suggesting that the heaviest workloads are closely related to decreased satisfaction levels among university professors. Janib et al. (2021) conducted a study that explored the relationship between the workload and the performance of

academics of the University of Research in Malaysia. They discovered that the increase in average workloads negatively professional commitment and job satisfaction.

The idea that workload and job satisfaction are inversely correlated is supported by a large number of studies. In a nationwide study of university employees in Australia, Winefield et al. (2003) discovered that one of the most commonly mentioned reasons for job discontent was heavy workloads. When institutional expectations rose without matching increases in staffing or resources, faculty members expressed feeling overburdened by conflicting demands. A feeling of undervaluation and emotional weariness were exacerbated by this imbalance. The statement was supported by Basson (2018), stress, discontent, and a decline in organizational loyalty are all correlated with an increase in workload.

Kinman and Jones (2008) investigated how increased workloads affected academics in the UK and discovered a strong correlation between higher job demands and poor work-life balance and worse job satisfaction. The authors emphasized how the pressure to achieve performance metrics, such publishing goals and student assessments, frequently resulted in longer workdays and a deterioration in personal wellbeing. These results support the idea that an excessive workload harms academic staff members' general mental health in addition to their job happiness.

When working in settings that mitigate workload stress through institutional support, Malaysian academics report better levels of satisfaction (Janib, 2022). In a similar vein, Melisa (2013) noted that workload has a major impact on academic staff job satisfaction at Krida Wacana Christian University, where there is frequently an uneven balance between teaching, research, and service.

Bakotic (2016) discovered that workers are more satisfied when they have control over their schedules and a manageable workload. In addition to teaching, academic institutions also have

administrative responsibilities, research obligations, student supervision, and committee participation, all of which can lead to stress if not handled well. The distilled findings of several studies converge in the notion that academics will probably experience dissatisfaction when they face an excessive workload without proportional institutional support. Herawati et al. (2023) emphasize the importance of supporting supervisors and colleagues, revealing how these relationships can directly influence work performance through job satisfaction. The present study suggests, considering all of the theoretical and empirical discoveries previously mentioned, that:

H3: Workload has a significant positive effect on the job satisfaction of academic staff

2.3 Underpinning Theory

Social Exchange Theory (SET), which holds that relationships at work are based on mutual exchanges of resources, support, and trust, can be used to examine academicians' job satisfaction. According to Blau (1964), SET highlights that academicians feel compelled to return the favor by becoming more dedicated, productive, and satisfied when institutions offer them fair treatment, sufficient resources, and recognition.

There are many theories used by researcher to explain this kind of study. In this study, Social Exchange Theory addresses four key components of people's social behaviour. According to the Social Exchange Theory (Homans, 1958; Blau, 1964), cost-benefit calculations and reciprocal exchanges control social connections. Because it places a strong emphasis on psychology and organizational behaviour, this theory offers an appropriate framework for investigating the variables influencing academic staff members' job satisfaction.

According to social exchange theory, transactions between participants in interdependent relationships create a norm of reciprocity and, potentially, quid pro quo reciprocity (Russell

Cropanzano and Marie S. Mitchell, 2005). Prior research has supported the application of the reciprocity norm and the social exchange theory to organizations. (Eisenberger, 1990)

This idea is supported by research, which shows that employees' perceptions of organizational support are strengthened by collegial connections, open communication, and a healthy work-life balance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). For instance, organizations that provide their employees with professional development opportunities and flexible schedules tend to have happier employees because these interactions create a sense of loyalty and community (Homans, 1961).

Furthermore, according to SET, perceived injustices in the exchange process are the root cause of job unhappiness. Academicians get disengaged and want to leave when they feel underappreciated or unsupported, upsetting the equilibrium of interactions (Emerson, 1976).

In conclusion, the importance of reciprocal connections is shown by the application of SET to academic work satisfaction. Academic institutions may improve employee satisfaction and promote long-term organizational performance by creating cultures that value equity, respect, and support.

2.4 Research Framework

The conceptual framework of this study was created to show how important aspects affecting academicians' job satisfaction relate to one another. The approach, which is supported by both empirical data and well-established theories, focuses on three main independent variables that are thought to have a major impact on the dependent variable, job satisfaction: Salary, work environment, and workload.

This framework is underpinned by Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), which posits that positive reciprocal relationships and fair treatment between employees and their institutions

foster greater job satisfaction. By integrating this theory, the study aims to explain how perceptions of these key areas influence academicians' overall job satisfaction.

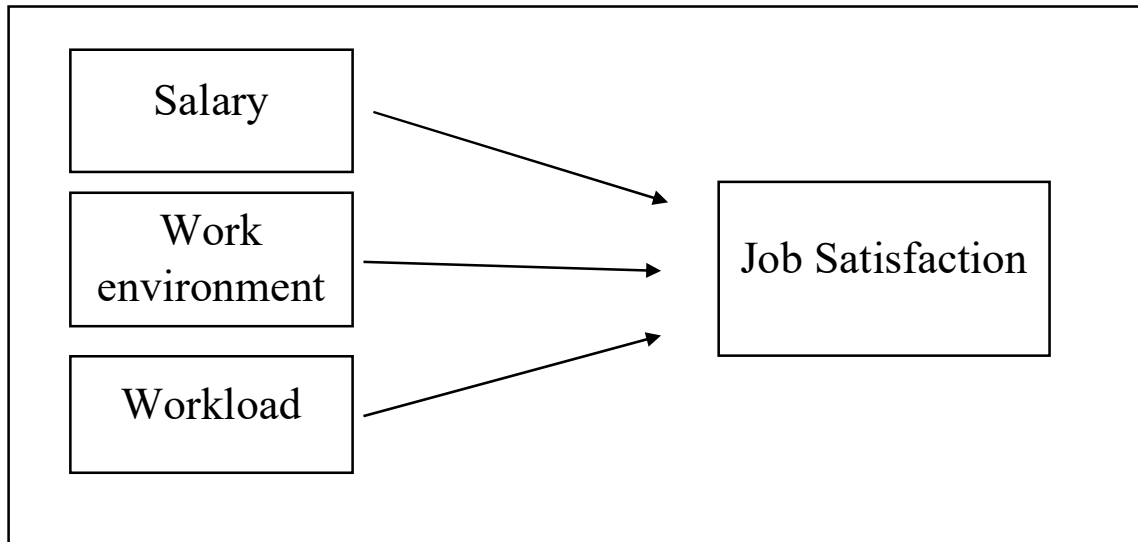


Figure 2.1 Research Framework

2.5 Summary

The existing literature on job satisfaction has been reviewed in this chapter, with a focus on its importance in academic contexts and its varied nature. Salary, work environment, and workload were identified in the research as important factors affecting academicians' job satisfaction. Salary was recognized as a critical extrinsic motivator, with fair and equitable compensation linked to higher satisfaction and organizational commitment. The working environment encompasses physical, social, and organizational factors that create supportive conditions vital to employee well-being and productivity. Workload was identified as a significant stressor that, when excessive or unbalanced, negatively impacts job satisfaction and performance. Overall, this chapter establishes a foundation for investigating how salary, working environment, and workload interact to influence job satisfaction among academicians, guided by the principles of Social Exchange Theory, which underpins the study's conceptual framework and hypotheses.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This section delineates the systematic approach employed for conducting quantitative research, emphasizing the rigorous collection and analysis of numerical data to test hypotheses and establish generalizable findings. This methodological framework quantifies attitudes, opinions, and behaviours to generalize results from a sample to a larger population, relying on statistical, mathematical, or computational techniques for data analysis (Mohajan, 2020).

3.2 Research Design

Research design is referred to the general strategy and analytical technique that have been selected to logically and cogently connect with the various study components and guarantee that the research problem will be fully examined (Trochim, 2006). It is an analysis that offers precise guidance for study processes (Creswell, 2018). In social science, finding information pertinent to the study subject is typically means defining the kind of evidence required to test a theory's underlying assumptions, appraise a program or precisely characterise and evaluate the significance of an observable phenomena (Creswell, 2018). According to Sekaran and Bougie (2016), a research design is a blueprint or plan for data collection, measurement and analysis in order to address the research questions.

In data collection methods, primary and secondary data are commonly used in research studies. This allows the researcher to test the hypothesis using quantitative approaches.

Throughout the data collection using these techniques, researcher can draw conclusions and research hypotheses can be supported or refuted (Creswell, 2018). For this study, data was collected by using a questionnaire and it was analysed using a cross sectional design which means an observational study that analysed data from a population at a single point in time

(Wang, 2020). These studies adopt a quantitative method, employing numerical measurement and analysis with the goal of generalising the results. By using the quantitative approach, the primary data gathered through questionnaires and is analysed further using a cross-sectional design.

This study studies the affect between organizational variables such workload, working environment, and salary with job satisfaction using a quantitative, cross-sectional research approach. A cross-sectional design is a useful option for comprehending perceptions in dynamic organizational contexts since it can be used to examine interactions at a specific point in time (Creswell, 2018)

This study adopts a quantitative research design, which allows for the systematic collection and analysis of numerical data to test hypotheses and identify patterns. Quantitative research typically involves surveys, polls, or questionnaires that gather measurable data from a specific population (Surendran, 2020). The use of quantitative data enables researchers to apply mathematical and statistical techniques to describe and infer relationships among variables (Creswell, 2018).

Data were collected using an online survey distributed to academic staff from a private high institutions, utilizing a stratified sampling technique to ensure diversity across departments and academic ranks (Saunders, 2019). Stratified random sampling involves a probability sampling technique where the researcher first identifying subgroups within the population and then choosing individuals at random from each stratum (Creswell, 2018). Selection of subgroups was done based on departmental classification. These participants represent various departments and academic disciplines, ensuring a diverse sample that reflects the institution's academic workforce. Selection criteria included a minimum level of working experience and

affiliation with different departments to capture a comprehensive perspective on job satisfaction across various roles.

Employees were chosen at random from each department, representing each stratum, for a total of at least 61 responders. At the time the study was conducted, there were only 84 lecturers employed at the institution. Using a stratified sampling technique and applying the eligibility criterion of at least one year of teaching experience, only 72 participants qualified for inclusion in this study. According to Sekaran & Bougie (2019) noting that in cases where the target population is limited, researchers may use a smaller sample size that adequately represents the group and still yields valid results.

The survey instrument was adapted from established job satisfaction scales, ensuring reliability and validity (Spector, 1997). In terms of data collection, primary data was obtained through self-administered questionnaires distributed to academic staff. This method allows for direct responses and minimizes researcher bias. The data collected was then analysed using statistical tools to determine the relationships among the study variables.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS software, employing descriptive statistics and multiple regression analysis to examine the relative impact of each organizational factor on job satisfaction (Hair, 2010). Ethical guidelines were rigorously followed, including securing informed consent and maintaining participant confidentiality.

3.3 Research Population

A sample is a subset of the population that reflects the features of the population, whereas the populations are the entire desired objects related to the information. A population refers to any collection of specified groups of human beings or of non-human entities such as objects, educational institutions, time units, geographical areas, prices of wheat or salaries drawn by individuals (Shukla, 2020). The aim of this study is to investigate the factors that affect

academician's job satisfaction in a private college. As of March 2025, the college employs about 84 academic employees which include positions such as senior lecturer and lecturer. However only 72 academicians are taken as the population for this study due to the remaining academicians with less than 1 year of service are not fulfilling the requirement of the survey.

3.4 Research Sample

A sample size is the proportion of a population that is required to ensure that there is sufficient data to draw conclusions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In quantitative research, selecting an appropriate sample is crucial to ensure the validity and generalizability of the findings (Creswell, 2018). Based on the sample size determination by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), the required sample size for this study is 61 for a population of 72.

3.5 Sampling Technique

This study employs a quantitative research design to examine academicians' job satisfaction based on three key factors. The target population consists of faculty members from a single private college, ensuring a focused analysis within this specific academic environment.

A stratified random sampling approach was used, where all full-time academicians at the college were invited to participate. This method was chosen due to the manageable population size and the need for comprehensive data collection. By including the entire faculty, the study minimizes selection bias and enhances the reliability of the findings.

Data was collected using a structured survey questionnaire, distributed electronically to ensure accessibility and ease of participation. Only academicians with at least one year of teaching experience were included, as their perspectives are crucial for assessing long-term job satisfaction.

While this approach ensures a complete representation of the faculty, potential limitations include non-response bias. To address this, follow-up reminders and confidentiality assurances were provided to encourage participation and ensure accurate responses.

3.6 Research Measurement

This study utilizes a structured survey questionnaire to assess academicians' job satisfaction based on three key factors: (1) Salary, (2) Working Environment, and (3) Workload. The questionnaire comprises 19 items, systematically categorized to evaluate different aspects of job satisfaction. Each factor is measured using structured survey items adapted from validated job satisfaction scales, ensuring reliability and relevance to the research objectives.

Figure 3. 1
Research Measurement

Construct	Items	References
Pay	1. I am satisfied with my current pay. 2. I am satisfied with my most recent pay increment 3. I am satisfied with the pay structure offered by the college. 4. I am paid fairly for my job with the current job responsibilities.	(Heneman & Schwab, 1985; Ong et al., 2020)
Work environment	1. I know what is expected of me in my role 2. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort in order to help this university be successful 3. I feel acknowledged for a job well done 4. I am supported when change and new initiatives are being introduced. 5. Staff morale is high within my department, institute, school, or unit	(Houston, 2006)
Workload	1. My workload has increased over the past 12 months	(Houston, 2006)

	2. I often need to work after hours to meet my work requirements	
	3. The amount of administration I am expected to do is reasonable	
	4. The number of students I am expected to teach and/or supervise is reasonable	
Job Satisfaction	1. I am satisfied with my job.	(Ong et al., 2020)
	2. I enjoy my work most of the days.	
	3. The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job.	
	4. My job description reflects what I really do.	
	5. I get a feeling of accomplishment from my job.	
	6. I get full credit for the work I do.	

3.7 Research Instrument

The research instrument for this study is a structured survey questionnaire designed to measure academicians' job satisfaction based on four key components: salary, working environment, workload, and general job satisfaction. The questionnaire consists of 19 items, systematically categorized to capture different dimensions of job satisfaction. It is divided into two main sections.

Section A gathers demographic information, including gender, departments, years of working experience and salary range. This data provides context for analysing the respondents' perspectives on job satisfaction. Section B focuses on job satisfaction measurement and includes 23 Likert-scale questions distributed across four categories. The job satisfaction section (Questions 1-6) measures overall job satisfaction, including career fulfilment and job motivation. The salary section (Questions 7-10) examines satisfaction with salary adequacy and fairness. The working environment section (Questions 11-19) evaluates workplace

conditions, colleague relationships, and institutional support. The workload section (Questions 20-23) assesses workload distribution, stress levels, and work-life balance.

A five-point Likert scale is used for all items in Section B, where 1 represents "Strongly Disagree" and 5 represents "Strongly Agree." This scale allows for a quantitative assessment of respondents' levels of agreement with each statement. Plus, to ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, the questionnaire was reviewed by experts in human resource management and organizational behaviour for content validity. A pilot study was also conducted with a small group of academicians to refine question clarity and consistency. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha was used to assess internal reliability, ensuring that the measurement tool maintains a reliability coefficient of $\alpha > 0.70$.

The questionnaire was distributed electronically to all full-time academicians at the private college. Data collected from the responses will be analysed using descriptive statistics, such as mean and standard deviation, to summarize findings, as well as inferential statistics, including correlation and regression analysis, to examine relationships between salary, working environment, workload, and overall job satisfaction levels.

3.8 Pilot Test

Before the full-scale data collection, a pilot test had been conducted to assess the reliability and clarity of the survey instrument. The purpose of the pilot test is to identify any ambiguities, unclear wording, or potential problems with the survey questions and format. A small group of 10-15 academic staff members from a similar private higher education institution was selected to complete the survey. The number of respondents in this pilot test was small due to the limited sample size. Julious (2005) suggests that a small sample size in a pilot study is acceptable as a preliminary step in research design. Therefore, this study was conducted as a pilot test to assess the reliability of the instruments and data collection procedures before the main study is carried

out. These individuals were not be part of the final study sample but would provide valuable feedback on the survey's clarity, relevance, and ease of completion.

The pilot test involved distributing the survey electronically, followed by a brief follow-up interview to gather feedback from participants. Based on the feedback received, necessary revisions will be made to the survey to improve its effectiveness and ensure that the questions accurately measure the intended variables. The final version of the instrument will be used for the actual data collection.

The pilot test was conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire using Cronbach's Alpha. The constructs of Job Satisfaction ($\alpha = 0.861$), Salary ($\alpha = 0.993$), and Working Environment ($\alpha = 0.889$) demonstrated strong to excellent reliability. However, the Workload scale yielded a lower reliability coefficient of 0.593, which is considered questionable (George & Mallery, 2003). These findings suggest that while most constructs are reliable, the workload dimension may require further revision or refinement for improved consistency.

Table 3. 1 Pilot Testing

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Job Satisfaction	6	0.861
Salary	4	0.993
Working Environment	5	0.889
Workload	4	0.593

3.9 Data Collection

This study used a quantitative research approach to collect data on job satisfaction among academic staff at a private higher education institution in Kuantan, Pahang, Malaysia. The primary instrument for data collection by using an established questionnaire adapted from Heneman & Schwab, (1985) for pay, Houston (2006) and Ong et al., (2020) for job satisfaction.

The questionnaire will include closed-ended questions designed to assess participants' satisfaction with salary, work environment, and workload that influencing job satisfaction. A Likert scale will be used to measure responses on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

The questionnaire was distributed electronically via email to the selected participants. The questionnaire was distributed to respondents via email by sharing a link to access the online Google Form. The consent form was embedded at the beginning of the Google Form, ensuring that participants provided informed consent before proceeding with the survey. Participants were given two weeks to complete and return the survey. Follow-up reminders were sent one week after the initial distribution. Data collected was automatically stored in a secure database.

To ensure ethical standards, informed consent was obtained from all participants, who were assured that their participation was voluntary and confidential. Participants' responses would remain anonymous, and their data would only be used for the purpose of this study.

Potential limitations included a low response rate, which may impact the generalizability of the findings, and the study's focus on a single institution, which might limit the breadth of the findings to a more generalized population.

3.10 Data Analysis Techniques

The data collected from the electronic questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26. Several statistical techniques were employed to meet the objectives of the study and to test the relationships between the independent variables (salary, working environment, and workload) and the dependent variable (academicians' job satisfaction). The analysis procedures are outlined as follows:

3.10.1 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize the demographic characteristics of the respondents and to provide an overview of the variables in the study. Measures such as mean, standard deviation, frequency, and percentage were calculated to illustrate the general patterns and trends in the data (Pallant, 2020)

3.10.2 Reliability Analysis

To assess the internal consistency of the measurement items, Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for each construct. A Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or above was considered acceptable, indicating a reliable measurement scale (Nunnally, 1994). This analysis ensured that the items used to measure salary, working environment, workload, and job satisfaction were consistent and dependable.

3.10.3 Multiple Regression Analysis

To assess the combined and individual effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable, multiple regression analysis was conducted. This technique is suitable for identifying predictors of a dependent variable and determining the extent to which each independent variable contributes to the outcome (Hair, 2010). The regression model provided insights into which factors most significantly influenced academicians' job satisfaction.

3.11 Summary

This study used a quantitative research design to examine how salary, working environment, and workload affect academicians' job satisfaction. Data were collected through electronic questionnaire, with 63 valid responses from lecturers at a private college. A purposive sampling method was used.

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, and multiple regression to examine relationships and test hypotheses. The research finding will be discussed in Chapter 4.



CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis and discussion of the study's results. The data collected from the respondents were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The response rate and respondent demographics are also provided. The analysis of the variables was conducted using several methods, including descriptive analysis, reliability testing, Pearson's correlation, and regression analysis. Additionally, the hypotheses are reviewed to determine whether they are accepted or rejected

4.2 Response Rate

A total of 72 questionnaires were distributed to the targeted lecturers. Out of these, 63 valid responses were returned, resulting in a response rate of 87.5%. This response rate is considered satisfactory for the study, as it ensures a representative sample for analysis, which is crucial for obtaining reliable and valid results (Fowler, 2014). The respondents were asked to complete the survey electronically via a Google Form link, with data collection taking place from 15th March to 31st March 2025. The study's response rate findings are shown in table:

Table 4. 1

Study Response Rate

Description	Number
Total Population	72
Total Sampling	61
Total Questionnaire Distributed	72
Total Questionnaire Returned	63
Response Rate	87.5%

4.3 Respondent's Demographic Profile

The demographic profile provides essential background for interpreting the study's findings. Key variables such as gender, department, years of experience, and salary may influence job satisfaction level.

The study comprised a total of 61 valid respondents. Among them, a majority were female academicians, representing 68.3% ($n = 43$) of the sample, while 31.7% ($n = 20$) were male. This indicates that female lecturers outnumber their male counterparts within the surveyed institution.

Respondents were drawn from four different departments. The Business Management and Account Department had the highest representation with 47.6% ($n = 30$). This was followed by the General Studies Department, which accounted for 30.2% ($n = 19$). The Mathematics and Computer Science Department contributed 12.7% ($n = 8$) of the sample, while the Engineering Department had the smallest representation at 9.5% ($n = 6$). This spread indicates a concentration of respondents in business-related disciplines.

In terms of working experience, more than half of the respondents (52.4%, $n = 33$) had been working for less than five years, suggesting a relatively young or newly employed academic workforce. Those with over 16 years of experience made up 20.6% ($n = 13$) of the sample, while 19% ($n = 12$) had 11 to 15 years of experience. Only 7.9% ($n = 5$) reported having 6 to 10 years of work experience. This distribution reflects a workforce skewed toward early-career professionals.

The salary range of the respondents showed that the highest proportion (38.1%, $n = 24$) earned below RM3000, highlighting potential concerns regarding compensation levels. Meanwhile, 30.2% ($n = 19$) earned above RM5000, suggesting a smaller group of senior or higher-paid academicians. Equal proportions of respondents (15.9%, $n = 10$ each) reported salaries within

the RM3001–RM4000 and RM4001–RM5000 brackets. This spread indicates a significant number of lecturers fall into the lower salary ranges, possibly reflecting their early career stage or institutional pay structure.

Table 4.2
Respondent Demographic Profile

	Demographic profile	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	20	31.7
	Female	43	68.3
Department	General Studies Department	19	30.2
	Business management and account department	30	47.6
	Mathematics and computer science Department	8	12.7
	Engineering Department	6	9.5
Years of working	Below 5 years	33	52.4
	6 – 10 Years	5	7.9
	11 – 15 Years	12	19.0
	Above 16 Years	13	20.6
Salary	Below RM3000	24	38.1
	RM3001 – RM4000	10	15.9
	RM4001 – RM5000	10	15.9
	Above RM5001	19	30.2

4.4 Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive analysis summarizes the essential characteristics of the variables being studied, giving a basic knowledge of the data. It gives researchers an initial understanding of participant responses prior to performing inferential analysis by allowing them to see patterns, primary tendencies, and variability within the dataset (Gravetter, 2017). In this study, academicians' job satisfaction, pay, working environment, and workload were examined using descriptive statistics to determine the minimum, maximum, and standard deviation scores.

The results indicate that respondents reported relatively high levels of job satisfaction ($M = 3.85$, $SD = 0.50$) and satisfaction with their working environment ($M = 3.84$, $SD = 0.50$). These two variables also demonstrated low standard deviations, indicating consistency in responses. The workload variable showed a slightly lower mean score ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 0.64$), suggesting moderate satisfaction among respondents, with slightly more variability in responses.

Among all variables, salary score recorded the lowest mean ($M = 3.19$, $SD = 0.95$), indicating that salary may be a less satisfactory aspect for the respondents. The relatively higher standard deviation also implies greater variation in opinions regarding salary.

Table 4.3
Descriptive Analysis

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation
Job Satisfaction	3.854	.5004
Salary	3.194	.9508
Working Environment	3.841	.5043
Workload	3.666	.6350

4.5 Reliability Analysis

To assess the internal consistency of the measurement scales used in this study, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were calculated for each variable. The results are presented in Table 4.5. Generally, a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.70 or above is considered acceptable, indicating good internal reliability (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

As shown in the table, the scale for Job Satisfaction (6 items) achieved a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.813, indicating good internal consistency. The Salary scale (4 items) demonstrated excellent reliability with a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.925, while the Working Environment scale (5 items) showed acceptable reliability at 0.787. However, the Workload scale (4 items) recorded a Cronbach's Alpha of 0.673, which is slightly below the recommended threshold. This suggests

that the internal consistency of the workload scale is questionable, and the items used to measure this construct may require further refinement in future studies.

These findings suggest that, overall, the measurement instruments employed in this study demonstrate acceptable to excellent levels of internal consistency, with the exception of the workload construct which warrants further review.

Table 4. 4

Reliability Analysis

Variable	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
Job Satisfaction	6	0.813
Salary	4	0.925
Working Environment	5	0.787
Workload	4	0.673

4.6 Multiple Regression Analysis

The model shows a moderately strong and statistically meaningful relationship between the predictor's salary, working environment, workload and job satisfaction. About 42% of the variability in job satisfaction can be explained by the model, which is quite good for social science research.

The R value of 0.650 in the regression analysis showed that there is a moderately high positive correlation between job satisfaction and the predictors salary, working environment, and workload. The combined effect of the three independent variables can account for about 42.2% of the variance in academicians' job satisfaction, according to the R Square value of 0.422. After controlling for the number of predictors, the model's explanatory capacity is confirmed by the Adjusted R Square of 0.392. A respectable degree of prediction accuracy is indicated by the estimate's standard error (0.39007).

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of salary, working environment, and workload on job satisfaction among academicians. The regression model

included three independent variables: salary score, working environment, and workload. The dependent variable was job satisfaction.

The model revealed that two out of the three predictors significantly contributed to the prediction of job satisfaction.

Working Environment had the strongest positive influence on job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.433$, $t = 4.223$, $p < .001$). This indicates that a more favourable working environment is significantly associated with higher levels of job satisfaction.

Salary also significantly predicted job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.301$, $t = 2.722$, $p = .009$), suggesting that better salary conditions are positively linked to job satisfaction.

Workload, however, did not significantly predict job satisfaction at the 0.05 level ($\beta = 0.213$, $t = 1.867$, $p = .067$), although the relationship approached significance. This implies that the effect of workload on job satisfaction is relatively weaker and not statistically conclusive in this model.

Overall, the results suggest that enhancing salary and working environment could lead to higher levels of job satisfaction among academicians, while the role of workload is less clear and may require further investigation.

Table 4. 5

Multiple Regression Analysis

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
.441 ^a	.1940	.1700	.7972

Model Summary^b

a. Predictors: (Constant), WE, WL, SL

b. Dependent Variable: JS

Coefficients^a

Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.082	.440		2.46	.017
SL	.430	.102	.433	4.22	<.001
WE	.168	.090	.213	1.87	.067
WL	.159	.058	.301	2.72	.009

a. Dependent Variable: JS

b. Predictors: (Constant), WE, WL, SL

4.7 Summary of Hypothesis Analysis

This study analyses the relationship between academicians' job satisfaction and their salary, work environment, and workload. Guided by Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), the hypotheses were formulated to assess the significance of these factors in shaping job satisfaction. Each hypothesis offers an organized method for comprehending the factors that influence employee satisfaction in the academic context by reflecting the anticipated link between the independent variables and job satisfaction.

Table 4. 6

Summary of Hypothesis

Hypotheses	Results
H1: Salary has a significant positive effect on the job satisfaction of academic staff	Accepted
H2: Working environment has a significant positive effect on the job satisfaction of academic staff	Accepted
H3: Workload has a significant negative effect on the job satisfaction of academic staff	Rejected

4.8 Summary

This chapter presented the results of the data analysis conducted to examine the relationship between salary, working environment, workload, and job satisfaction among academic staff in a private higher education institution in Malaysia. Data were collected from 61 valid responses and analyzed using SPSS version 26 analysing the relationship between the variables using multiple regression analysis, correlation analysis, and descriptive statistics.

In this study, the population comprised 72 academicians from Kolej Poly-Tech MARA Kuantan. Only those with at least one year of service were included, as they met the criteria for participation. The Social Exchange Theory (SET) served as the theoretical foundation for the study, highlighting the mutually beneficial relationship between organizational characteristics and employee's satisfaction.

The workload scale had a Cronbach's Alpha that was just below the suggested standard, but otherwise the measuring tools' internal consistency ranged from generally acceptable to outstanding. It also means that the items used to measure workload may need to be reviewed and improved upon in further research.

The results of the multiple regression analysis showed that the model had a moderately high predictive connection, accounting for 42.2% of the variance in job satisfaction. The working environment was the most significant and significant predictor of job satisfaction among the three independent factors. Salary also had a substantial positive impact. The impact of workload on job satisfaction was less and less clear, even if it was trending positively and did not achieve statistical significance.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an interpretation of the study's findings based on the stated research objectives and hypotheses. It discusses the key results in relation to existing literature, in the same time providing insight into the significance and relevance of the outcomes. The chapter also highlights the practical and theoretical implications of the findings, outlining how it would contribute to the understanding of job satisfaction among academicians. Additionally, it addresses the limitations encountered during the study and offers recommendations for future research to enhance and build upon the current investigation.

5.2 Recapitulation of the Research Findings

This study examined the influence of salary, working environment, and workload on job satisfaction among full-time academic staff at a private higher education institution in Kuantan, Pahang. Using data from 63 valid responses (87.5% response rate), analysis through SPSS revealed that salary and working environment significantly and positively affected job satisfaction, with the working environment emerging as the strongest predictor. Workload, however, showed no significant relationship. Descriptive findings indicated generally positive perceptions of job satisfaction and working environment, but lower satisfaction with salary. These results highlight the importance of fair compensation and supportive work conditions in enhancing job satisfaction for academic staff in private higher education institutions.

5.3 Discussion

5.3.1 Relationship Between Salary and Job Satisfaction

The results in findings show that salary significantly predicts job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.301$, $t = 2.722$, $p = .009$), indicate a positive relationship between compensation and the overall satisfaction of academic staff. This suggests that when lecturers receive fair and adequate pay, they are more likely to feel valued and motivated in their roles.

The finding underscores the importance of competitive and transparent salary structures in fostering a satisfied and committed academic workforce, thereby contributing to improved job performance and institutional stability in the higher education sector. Pay satisfaction is a critical factor influencing the performance of employees across sectors, including academia. For academicians, who engage in intellectually demanding tasks involving teaching, research, publication, and service to their institutions, satisfaction with salary can significantly impact their motivation, engagement, and overall job performance. This relationship is best understood through the lens of Social Exchange Theory (SET), which offers a robust framework to explain the dynamics of workplace relationships based on reciprocity, fairness, and mutual benefit.

In the academic context, salary refers not only to the actual salary but also to how fairly academicians perceive their compensation relative to their responsibilities and contributions. When institutions provide competitive and equitable compensation packages, academic staff are more likely to experience a sense of recognition and value, which in turn fosters a positive psychological contract. The lower satisfaction with salary may reflect the fact that most respondents earned below RM3000, a figure consistent with entry-level academic positions in the private high institution sector.

According to Eisenberger (1990) perceived organizational support of which fair pay is a component encourages employees to reciprocate through increased effort, improved

performance, and reduced turnover intentions. Empirical research supports the positive link between pay satisfaction and job performance. For instance, Ghafoor (2012) found that academic staff who were satisfied with their compensation exhibited higher levels of performance and job involvement. Similarly, Gary Lim Aik Soon, (2013) emphasized that satisfied employees are more likely to demonstrate commitment to their organizations and perform beyond the minimum required tasks. The perception that one is fairly compensated contributes to a sense of justice and trust within the organization, which aligns with SET's notion of reciprocal relationships based on mutual respect and benefit.

In summary, the nuances of how salary influences work satisfaction among academic staff requires a multifaceted approach that incorporates theoretical frameworks such as the theory of social exchange. The whole of literature reveals that if the salary remains an essential element of work satisfaction and retention strategies, it is fundamentally linked to various other factors, thus illustrating the need for a holistic perspective to create an enriching academic work environment.

5.3.2 Relationship Between Work Environment and Job Satisfaction

The findings reveal that the working environment has the strongest positive influence on job satisfaction among academicians ($\beta = 0.433$, $t = 4.223$, $p < .001$). This significant relationship indicates that a supportive, well-structured, and conducive work atmosphere greatly enhances employee satisfaction.

It suggests that when academicians feel valued, supported, and comfortable in their work settings, their overall job satisfaction improves. A positive working environment in higher education institutions includes various elements such as collegial support, adequate resources, fair workload distribution, opportunities for collaboration, clear communication channels, and recognition of academic achievements. This aligns with the reciprocity norm central to SET,

where beneficial treatment by the organization is met with positive attitudes and behaviours by employees.

Social Exchange Theory, introduced by Blau (1964), is grounded in the idea that human relationships, including those in the workplace, are formed through reciprocal exchanges. When employees perceive that their organization offers support, respect, and a conducive work environment, they are likely to reciprocate through increased commitment, loyalty, and job satisfaction. In contrast, when the working environment is perceived as negative or unsupportive, employees may feel undervalued, leading to dissatisfaction and disengagement.

Research supports the significance of the work environment in determining academic staff satisfaction. Schulze (2006) found that a supportive academic work environment positively correlates with job satisfaction and faculty performance. Likewise, Yee (2018) emphasized that in Malaysian universities, a healthy workplace climate improves not only job satisfaction but also the overall institutional learning culture. These findings are consistent with SET, which suggests that when employees feel supported and valued in their work setting, they are more likely to experience satisfaction and psychological attachment to their organization.

Furthermore, Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) explained that the exchange relationship between employee and employer is strengthened when the working environment is perceived as fair, respectful, and resourceful. In this context, job satisfaction becomes an emotional and behavioural response to how well the organization fulfils its side of the social exchange. When institutions provide a safe, inclusive, and resource-rich environment, academicians are more likely to develop trust and satisfaction in their roles, reinforcing a cycle of positive reciprocal exchanges.

In conclusion, through the lens of Social Exchange Theory, the relationship between working environment and job satisfaction is shaped by perceptions of fairness, support, and mutual

respect. Higher education institutions that prioritize a positive working atmosphere are more likely to cultivate satisfied, motivated, and committed academic staff, thereby enhancing both individual and organizational performance.

5.3.3 Relationship Between Workload and Job Satisfaction

The findings analysis indicates that workload did not significantly predict job satisfaction at the 0.05 level ($\beta = 0.213$, $t = 1.867$, $p = .067$), although the result was close to significance. This suggests that while there may be some influence of workload on job satisfaction, it is relatively weak and not statistically conclusive within this model.

According to SET, relationships in the workplace are built on the norm of reciprocity. When employees feel that their contributions such as time and effort are fairly recognized and reciprocated by the organization through support, rewards, or manageable demands, they are more likely to feel satisfied and committed (Cropanzano, 2005). However, if the workload is perceived as excessive and not matched with adequate support or recognition, the social exchange becomes unbalanced. This imbalance often leads to dissatisfaction, reduced motivation, and in extreme cases, withdrawal or turnover.

In the academic context, workload includes not only classroom hours but also preparation time, research output, committee involvement, and administrative responsibilities. When these tasks accumulate without sufficient support or time, it leads to role overload and eventually burnout (Melisa T, 2013). For example, Basson (2018) found that high workloads increase emotional strain and reduce job satisfaction among academic staff. Similarly, Akob (2016) highlighted that workload negatively affects job satisfaction and performance, especially when academicians feel they cannot meet expectations within reasonable working hours.

The SET framework suggests that when academicians perceive fairness in workload distribution, they are more inclined to maintain a positive attitude toward their job. For

instance, Hackman (1980) argue that job satisfaction is higher when work roles are clearly defined, manageable, and enriched with autonomy and support. In a fair exchange, institutions provide sufficient time, autonomy, and support to handle tasks, while academicians reciprocate with productivity, engagement, and loyalty.

In conclusion, through the lens of Social Exchange Theory, workload becomes more than just a quantity of tasks it is a signal of how fairly an organization treats its employees. Academic institutions that recognize the contributions of their staff and strive for workload fairness foster greater job satisfaction, loyalty, and organizational commitment.

5.4 Implications of Findings

5.4.1 Theoretical Implications

This study provides important theoretical contributions by applying Social Exchange Theory (SET) to explain the dynamics between job satisfaction and organizational factors such as salary, working environment, and workload. SET, as proposed by Blau (1964), suggests that social relationships, including those in the workplace, are formed based on reciprocal exchanges. Employees are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes and behaviours when they perceive that their organization provides them with fair and valuable resources in return for their contributions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

The significant positive relationship between salary and job satisfaction supports SET, as financial compensation is a key form of tangible reward in the employment exchange. When employees recognize their salary as fair and reflecting to their work value, they are more inclined to reciprocate with positive attitudes, such as higher job satisfaction (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Adequate compensation signals recognition and appreciation from the employer, which strengthens the social exchange relationship.

In addition, working environment show the strong positive effect on job satisfaction, reinforcing the relevance of SET. A supportive, collegial, and resourceful work setting can be seen as an intangible benefit or intrinsic reward. When employees feel respected, safe, and supported at work, they perceive the organization as fulfilling its part of the social exchange, which encourages them to respond with higher levels of commitment and satisfaction (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

However, the non-significant influence of workload presents a more delicate interpretation. SET posits that employees evaluate the costs of their work, such as effort and stress, against the rewards they receive (Blau, 1964). While high workload typically represents a "cost" in this exchange, its limited impact in this study may suggest that when sufficient rewards like good salary are present, employees may be more tolerant of heavier workloads (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). This indicates that workload may function as a conditional factor within SET, whose negative impact can be mitigated by adequate compensatory benefits.

The findings, taken together, expand on SET by showing that job satisfaction is significantly influenced by socio-emotional (working environment) and economic (wage) exchanges. The study also emphasizes the importance of perceptions of fairness and balance in the exchange relationship, as employees are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs when they believe that the rewards outweigh the costs.

5.4.2 Practical Implications

The findings of this study provide several practical implications for human resource practices and institutional policies within private higher education institutions. Addressing the key determinants of job satisfaction which are salary and working environment that capable to lead to more engaged, motivated, and productive academic staff, ultimately enhancing institutional effectiveness.

Firstly, the strong positive relationship between working environment and job satisfaction highlighting the need for institutions to cultivate a positive and supportive organizational climate. A good work environment characterized by healthy open communication, ethical collegial relationships, professional autonomy, and psychological safety contributes significantly to employee well-being and satisfaction (Raziq & Maulabakhsh, 2015). Human resource managers and academic leaders should prioritize improvements in administrative assistance, interpersonal relationships, and physical infrastructure. Regular feedback systems and staff engagement initiatives would be able to help identify workplace issues early and foster a culture of continuous improvement.

Secondly, the significant role of salary in predicting job satisfaction highlights the importance of fair and competitive compensation practices in company. When employees acknowledge that their remuneration is equitable and reflective of their effort and contributions, they are more likely to feel valued and satisfied in their roles (Sharma & Jyoti, 2019). Institutions should pattern their salary structures against industry standards and ensure transparency in compensation policies. Additionally, implementing performance-based incentives, career progression pathways, and non-monetary benefits such as research allowances or conference sponsorships can increasingly improve satisfaction and retention rates among academic staff (Tella, Ayeni, & Popoola, 2007).

However, although workload did not significantly predict job satisfaction in this study, its near-significance and moderate variation among respondents suggest that it remains as an important operational concern. Excessive workloads, especially without right institutional support, can lead to stress, burnout, and reduced performance of academicians over time (Winefield et al., 2003). Institutions should establish clear workload policies, ensure that fair distribution of teaching and administrative tasks were carried out and provide flexibility where possible.

Special attention should be given to early-career academicians who may lack the experience or resources to manage multiple responsibilities effectively.

Furthermore, by focusing on enhancing the work environment and offering competitive compensation, institutions can improve academic staff satisfaction, reduce turnover, and foster a more committed and productive workforce (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Human resource policies should be informed by empirical data to ensure that organizational practices align with the needs and expectations of academic staff.

In conclusion, addressing the identified factors especially salary and working environment can significantly improve job satisfaction among academicians. These insights can guide institutional leaders in formulating effective HR strategies that not only support individual well-being but also contribute to the long-term sustainability and quality of higher education institutions.

5.5 Limitation of Study

Despite the valuable insights provided by this research, several limitations must be acknowledged. One key limitation is the reliance on self-reported measures for data collection. The accuracy of the findings is inherently influenced by the participants' honesty and their ability to reflect on and articulate their own experiences. As the study employed a questionnaire-based survey, responses were subject to personal interpretation, mood at the time of answering, and individual biases. This reliance on introspective ability may have introduced response bias, such as social desirability bias, where respondents may provide answers, they believe are expected or viewed favourably rather than reflecting their true perceptions or feelings.

Moreover, the use of a cross-sectional design restricts the ability to make causal inferences between the variables. While associations can be identified, it is not possible to determine

cause-and-effect relationships with certainty. Longitudinal studies would provide deeper insights into how variables like salary, working environment, and workload influence job satisfaction over time.

Additionally, the sample was limited to full-time academicians at a single private college in Kuantan, Pahang, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings. Part-time lecturers, administrative staff, and academicians from other regions or types of institutions were not included, potentially omitting valuable perspectives.

Lastly, while quantitative methods offer the advantage of objectivity and generalizability, the absence of qualitative data limits the depth of understanding regarding personal experiences and nuanced factors affecting job satisfaction.

5.6 Recommendations for Future Study

This study provides a foundation for understanding the relationship between salary, working environment, workload, and job satisfaction among academicians in a private higher education institution. However, to enhance the generalizability and depth of understanding, several recommendations are proposed for future research.

Firstly, future studies should consider expanding the sample size and geographical scope. Including multiple institutions across different states or both public and private universities in Malaysia would enable comparative analysis and enhance the representativeness of the findings. This broader scope may uncover regional or institutional differences that influence job satisfaction.

Secondly, while this study employed a quantitative approach, incorporating qualitative or mixed-method research designs in future studies can provide deeper insights. Semi-structured interviews or focus group discussions could capture the subjective experiences of academicians

and reveal underlying reasons behind their satisfaction or dissatisfaction factors that may not be fully captured through closed-ended survey questions.

Thirdly, longitudinal research is encouraged to explore changes in job satisfaction over time. A cross-sectional design, as used in this study, only offers a snapshot of perceptions. By tracking changes across semesters or academic years, future researchers can better assess how evolving institutional policies or external factors influence satisfaction.

In addition, future research could include other relevant variables, such as leadership style, career development opportunities, work-life balance, and psychological well-being, to gain a more holistic understanding of what influences job satisfaction among academicians.

Finally, researchers should consider using validated multi-item scales for each construct and explore the role of mediating or moderating variables, such as organizational commitment or perceived organizational support, to build a more nuanced theoretical model.

By addressing these recommendations, future studies can contribute to a more comprehensive and actionable understanding of academic work satisfaction.

5.7 Conclusion

This study investigated the relationship between salary, working environment, and workload and their influence on job satisfaction among academicians at a private higher education institution in Kuantan, Pahang. the study emphasized that when institutions offer fair compensation, manageable workloads, and a supportive work environment, employees tend to reciprocate with increased satisfaction, loyalty, and performance.

The results revealed that salary and workload have a significant positive impact on job satisfaction, while the working environment, although positively correlated, was found to have the least influence among the three variables. These findings suggest that tangible and practical

aspects of employment such as fair remuneration and balanced responsibilities play a more critical role in shaping academicians' satisfaction levels, consistent with prior studies (Ghafoor, 2012; Melisa, 2013; Du Plessis, 2016).

The study, however, is not without limitations. It relied on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias or inaccuracies due to participants' introspective abilities and perceptions. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design limits causal inference, and the sample was confined to a single institution, restricting the generalizability of the findings.

Despite these limitations, the study offers valuable insights into how human resource policies and practices in higher education can be optimized. Institutions should pay closer attention to equitable salary structures and manageable workloads to enhance job satisfaction and reduce turnover.

In conclusion, job satisfaction among academicians is influenced by both salary and work environment factors. Adopting fair, balanced, and supportive human resource strategies can enhance academic staff well-being and institutional performance. Future research should consider a wider geographical scope, include additional influencing variables, and employ longitudinal or mixed-method approaches for deeper insights.

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APPENDIX A



QUESTIONNAIRE SURVEY

Dear respondents,

I am currently pursuing my Master Degree at University Utara Malaysia in Human Resource Management programme. I am conducting a research study on **“The Impact Of Salary, Working Environment, And Workload On Academicians’ Job Satisfaction In A Private College”**. Therefore, I would like to invite you to be part of this study by providing your valuable response towards this questionnaire. The survey will take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. Please be informed that all the information collected are strictly for academic purpose only and your confidentiality and anonymity are assured.

Your time and assistance are greatly appreciated. Thank you in advance for your time and contribution in participating this study.

Best regards,

Hazirah Izzati Samsul Kahar

Master of Human Resource Management

School of Business & Management

College of Business, UUM

Section A: Demographic Information

This section intends to get information on the respondents' demographic background. Please specify your answer by choosing the relevant answers provided.

1. Gender:

☐

Male

☐

Female

2. Department: *Short answer google form

☐

GS

☐

BMA

☐

MCS

☐

CE

3. Years of Working:

☐

<5 Years

☐

6-10 Years

☐

11-15 years

☐

>16 Years

4. Salary:

☐

<RM3K

☐

RM3.1K-
RM4K

☐

RM4.1K-
RM5K

☐

>RM5.1K

**ABBREVIATIONS:

GS - General studies, BMA – Business Management & Accounting, MCS – Mathematics & Computer Science, CE - Civil Engineering

Section B: Job Satisfaction

Please circle the most appropriate option that best indicate your agreement level about the following statements.

	Extremely Disagree (SD) 1	Disagree (D) 2	Neutral (N) 3	Agree (A) 4	Extremely Agree (SA) 5
Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I am satisfied with my job.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I enjoy my work most of the days.	1	2	3	4	5

3. The major satisfaction in my life comes from my job.	1	2	3	4	5
4. My job description reflects what I really do.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I get a feeling of accomplishment from my job.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I get full credit for the work I do.	1	2	3	4	5

Section C: Salary

Please circle the most appropriate option that best indicate your agreement level about the following statements.

	Extremely Disagree (SD) 1	Disagree (D) 2	Neutral (N) 3	Agree (A) 4	Extremely Agree (SA) 5
Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I am satisfied with my current pay.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am satisfied with my most recent pay increment.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am satisfied with the pay structure offered by the college.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am paid fairly for my job with the current job responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5

Section D: Working Environment

Please circle the most appropriate option that best indicate your agreement level about the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (SD) 1	Disagree (D) 2	Neutral (N) 3	Agree (A) 4	Strongly Agree (SA) 5
Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I know what is expected of me in my role.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am willing to put in a great deal of effort in order to help this university be successful.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I feel acknowledged for a job well done.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I am supported when change and new initiatives are being introduced.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Staff morale is high within my department, institute, school, or unit.	1	2	3	4	5

Section E: Workload

Please circle the most appropriate option that best indicate your agreement level about the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree (SD) 1	Disagree (D) 2	Neutral (N) 3	Agree (A) 4	Strongly Agree (SA) 5
Questions: Task Performance	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. My workload has increased over the past 12 months.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I often need to work after hours to meet my work requirements.	1	2	3	4	5
3. The amount of administration I am expected to do is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5
4. The number of students I am expected to teach and/or supervise is reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you.