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**THE INFLUENCE OF WORK ENVIRONMENT AND
LEADERSHIP ON THE JOB SATISFACTION OF SOLDIERS**

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Abstract

This study was undertaken to examine the relationship between work environment and leadership on the job satisfaction of soldiers. A survey method was employed to collect data from Malaysian soldiers at a military camp in Sungai Besi, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. A total of 326 soldiers from different backgrounds were sampled and the data was analyzed using statistical methods including SPSS version 22.0 and structural equation modelling SmartPLS version 3.0. The results show that the correlation between work environment and job satisfaction is not significant with the β value of 0.049 and t value of 0.609. However, for leadership, a significant relationship was found with the β value of 0.395 with the t values of 6.605. It appears that for soldiers, leadership is an important criteria in determining their job satisfaction which implies that leadership should be taken seriously by the authorities entrusted with leadership training and development in the military.

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Keywords: Work environment, leadership, job satisfaction, soldiers, SmartPLS.



1. Introduction

Job satisfaction is always associated with life satisfaction and a great deal of research has been carried to discern this nexus. According to Locke (1976) job satisfaction is ‘a pleasure or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one’s job or job experiences’. It can affect one’s work behaviour and then either directly or indirectly will affect the company or organization’s performance. In education, teachers’ dissatisfaction with their job is the primary contributor toward their negative feelings while, on the other hand, teachers with high level of job satisfaction are more likely to improve their teaching efforts and engage in continuing education to higher levels (Latham, 1998; Mertler, 2002). According to Clark (1997) if employees are not satisfied with the assigned jobs which could be due to unsafe working conditions or when their ideas are not appreciated in the decision making process making them feel divorced from the organization, their performance will not be up to the standard or the expectation of the supervisors.

A study by Harrington et al (2001) job satisfaction in a military setting found that job satisfaction is one of the main predictors that indicates the possibility of a military personnel leaving the job. This is especially more pronounced for lower rank officers whereby as highlighted by Mitchell (1970) since in military the differentiation between line and staff has been unusually well defined and for officers the line has come to be synonymous with command. There are many factors which affect the worker’s job satisfaction and one of the most important factors is the working environment. Working environment significantly impacts employee morale, productivity, engagement and, at the end, their job satisfaction (Kitana & Karam, 2017; Elnaga, 2013; Salunke, 2015). According to Spector (1997) most businesses which ignore the working environment within their organization results in adverse effect on the performance of their employees.

The working environment encompasses safety for employees, job security, good relations with co-workers, recognition and participation in the decision making process (Raziqa & Maulabakhsh, 2015; Jain & Kaur, 2014). Once employees realize that the organization recognizes and appreciates their work, they will have a high level of commitment and a sense of ownership for their organization. In military organizations, exhaustion and burnout are the two prime factors that relate to job satisfaction causing the personnel to leave the job. Voulgaris et al. (2016) studied job satisfaction among the lower-ranking officers of the Hellenic Armed Forces and found that working conditions and the behaviour of the Command, that is the leadership, are among the most significant factors affecting job satisfaction among soldiers.

Another important factor that significantly affects the employee’s job satisfaction is the leadership of the organization (Kiplangat, 2017; Belias & Koustelios, 2014; Sheikh Ali, Sidow & Guleid, 2013). Leadership is defined as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Leadership can be described as a social contract between the leader and his followers, where the leader’s functions are to lead, preserve and serve his followers fairly (Khaliq Ahmad, 2007). A good leader is able to motive his or her employees to perform to the best of their abilities. In general, there are three types of leadership namely laissez faire, democratic and autocratic. Even though the debate on the influence of leadership on a company’s performance has been contested, there are those who argue that the disposition of leaders especially in the decision making process in a complex, competitive

environment impacts profitability (Yates, 2014; Nadarasa & Thuraisingam, 2014). A study by Puni, (2014) found that in the service sector, the companies that practice a democratic style are associated with high financial performance and sustainability as compared to autocratic and laissez faire styles. In the military, the source of stress and tension is normally due to technical supervision by the high ranking staff of the lower staff (Mitchell, 1970).

2. Problem Statement

This study was conducted to identify the relationship between work environment and leadership in influencing the level of job satisfaction among military personnel in Malaysia. This study is important since the results will assist the organization in improving the form of leadership and working environment in enhancing the organization's achievement and the performance of military personnel.

3. Research Questions

The main questions of this study is to investigate the relationships between work environment and job satisfaction and between leadership and job satisfaction.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to measure the relationship between work environment and leadership on the job satisfaction. Subsequently, this study has two major objectives, first, to examine the relationship between work environment and job satisfaction and second, to examine the relationship between leadership and job satisfaction.

5. Research Methods

The study adopted a quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between work environment and leadership as independent variables and job satisfaction as the dependent variable. Based on this, in the conceptual framework two (2) hypotheses were generated as shown in Figure 01.

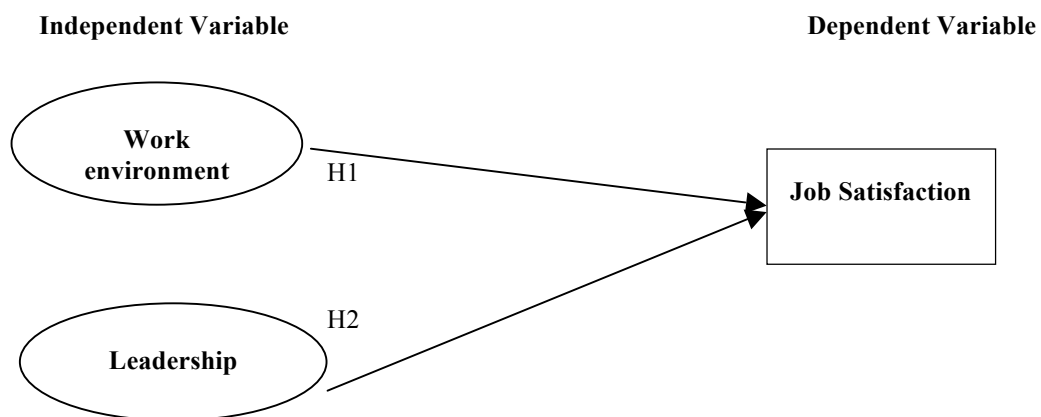


Figure 01. The relationship between work environment, leadership and job satisfaction

This research is based on the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There is a relationship between the element of work environment and job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 2: There is a relationship between the element of leadership and job satisfaction.

A cross-sectional research design was utilized because it allowed the researcher to combine job satisfaction literature, the pilot study and the actual survey as the main procedure of collecting data for the study. The pilot study, involving 30 samples of military personnel of different ranks from the study area, was carried out to ensure the questionnaire items are easily understood by the respondents, to avoid sensitive questions and to eliminate questionnaire items that are not relevant to the study so as to generate more accurate and reliable data. The reliability of the questionnaire was tested using Cronbach Alpha in which alpha coefficient is at least 0.7 for the data to be considered reliable. A set of self-structured questionnaire was distributed at the military camp in Sungai Besi, Kuala Lumpur comprising the Army Field Headquarters, the First Battalion of the Royal Malay Regiment and the Station Staff of the Sungai Besi Headquarters. The convenience sampling technique was employed to distribute 326 sets of questionnaire to soldiers and the useable samples returned to the researchers, yielded a response rate of 100% from the studied organization. The questionnaires were answered by participants based on their consent and on a voluntarily basis.

The survey questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section related to the demographic information of the respondents which includes gender, rank, team, age, marital status, duration of service and educational background. For the second section, eleven items were provided dealing with work environment, 19 items on leadership and 18 items for job satisfaction indicators which include knowledge on job description and its scope and problem solving techniques. This questionnaire was based on and adjusted from literature review extracted from Ali (2001), Allen and Meyer (1997), Farsi, et al., (2015), Lee & Choi (2003), and Kuvaas (2011). The measurement was based on a scale of 1 to 7 where 1 represents *strongly disagree* and 7 denotes *strongly agree*. All the Cronbach alpha values are above 0.7 which indicates that the reliability or the internal consistency of the data is high (see Table 01). The statistical analysis of the data was carried out based on Structural Equation Modelling using the Smart PLS version 3.0.

Table 01. Cronbach Alpha Values

Variable	Cronbach Alpha values
Work Environment	0.793
Leadership	0.881
Job satisfaction	0.913

6. Findings

Most of the respondents are male (89.6%), rank of Corporal/Lance Corporal (51.5%), ranging between 21 to 30 years old (54.9%). More than half of the respondents (56.1%) are married with years of

service ranging from 11 to 15 years (35%). More than two thirds of the respondents (70.9%) possess secondary school certificates with a salary range of between RM 2,000 to RM3, 500 per month (46.9%).

Table 02. Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Descriptive Statistics	Variables		
	Work environment	Work environment	Work environment
Min	6.02	5.74	5.77
Median	6.09	5.95	6.00
Standard deviation	0.866	0.886	0.970
Minimum	1	1	1
Maximum	7	7	7
Range	6	6	6
The interquartile range (IQR)	1	1	1
skewness	-2.519	-1.844	-2.027
Kurtosis	10.698	6.455	6.551
percentile			
25 th	5.73	5.32	5.39
50 th	6.09	5.95	6.00
75 th	6.55	6.26	6.35
90 th	7.00	6.68	6.79
Level			
Unsatisfactory (1-2.33)	3(0.9)	3(0.9)	6(1.8)
Satisfactory (2.34-3.67)	5(1.5)	6(1.8)	3(0.9)

Table 02 shows the results for the work environment with the scale from 1 to 7 with the interval of 6 and the median value 6.09 with standard deviation of 0.866. It indicates that the level of favourable work environment is relatively high. Even though the skewness value is leaning towards negative it is still within the plus-minus 2.0 as cut-off point as suggested by George and Mallery (2003). As for the percentile, at 25th the value is 5.73 and at 75th the value is 6.55 which account for 50% of the respondents. Based on the scale of 1 to 7, it shows that less than 1% felt dissatisfied with their work environment followed by 1.5% who are just satisfied. However, 97.5% of the respondents reported being very satisfied with the current work environment.

As for leadership, the results show that the median value is 5.95 with standard deviation of 0.886 and the min value of 5.74 which indicates the level of leadership is also relatively high. Besides, only 10% of the respondents showed a reading of 6.68 and above which means only 10 % of the respondents for the leadership obtained the reading 6.68 and above. Overall only 0.9% and 1.8% of the respondents reported that their leadership level is unsatisfactory to satisfactory respectively. 97.2% reported an excellent level of leadership. This finding may be related to the norm that in a military organization it is vital to have effective and high level of leadership in order for military leaders to carry out missions

efficiently and successfully. For the job satisfaction, the median value is 6.00 with standard deviation 0.97.

The min value is 5.77 which again indicates the overall high level of job satisfaction among the respondents with the skewness value of -2.027. On the percentile, at the percentile of 25th the value is 5.39 and at 75th the value is 6.36 and both percentiles cover 50% of the respondents with values in the range of 5.39 to 4.50. Only 10% of the respondents show the level of job satisfaction is above 6.79. For the element of leadership, the study shows that it contributes to the high coefficient.

Table 03. Mean, STDEV, T-Value, P-Value (s=326)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Work Environment-> Job Satisfaction	0.049	0.047	0.0801	0.609	0.543
Leadership -> Job Satisfaction	0.395	0.396	0.060	6.605	0.000

Table 04. SmartPLS Results

Relationship	β	t	R ²	Results
Work Environment -----> Job Satisfaction	0.049	0.609	0.622	Not Significant
Leadership -----> Job Satisfaction	0.395***	6.605		Significant

The results of the SmartPLS path model analysis revealed two important findings as shown in Table 04. Firstly, the element of work environment was not significantly correlated with job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.049$; $t = 0.609$), therefore H_1 was not supported. Secondly, the element of leadership was significantly correlated with job satisfaction ($\beta = 0.395$; $t = 6.605$), therefore H_2 was supported. These results demonstrate that leadership is an important determinant of job satisfaction.

7. Conclusion

The study tested a theoretical framework developed based on the job satisfaction research literature. The results show that the relationship between work environment and job satisfaction was not significant, which could be due to the fact that the military environment is highly dependent on team work and their missions supersede personal needs. Hence, working environment does not significantly affected their job satisfaction. The study also found that leadership is significantly correlated with job satisfaction which indicates that the relationship between the superior officers and their subordinates is crucial and improving this relationship may increase the level of job satisfaction. The importance of this relationship cannot be under-estimated and more studies into this are required to determine the extent to which leadership can promote and/or undermine soldiers' performance on the job. The implications of this is clear as soldiers' performance on the job can determine the sovereignty and security of the nation in times of war or international disputes. Hence, studies like this one can help authorities tasked with

leadership training and development to prioritise those leadership traits and skills that will cement a strong bond between the officers as leaders and the soldiers.

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