



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRUST, MONITORING MECHANISMS,  
COMMUNICATION, AND WORK PERFORMANCE OF ACADEMICIANS  
IN MALAYSIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES***

**TAN LUEN PENG**

**GSM 2013 17**

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TAN LUEN PENG

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA  
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By

TAN LUEN PENG

**Thesis Submitted to the Graduate School of Management, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

**October 2013**



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**March 2013**

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## DEDICATION

The greatest lesson I have learned throughout the pursuance of this research was that I have the belief and faith in myself that I was able to complete this endeavour which deemed to be impossible to achieve by many others. At the same time, I have learned to be humble to know how vast the ocean of knowledge is. What I know and understand is insignificant just as a drop of rain in the sea. In pursuing the truth of knowledge, the sky is the limit. I appreciate all who have contributed to the body of knowledge.

I express my heartfelt appreciation to the members of my family who have been the greatest support and source of motivation for me throughout my graduate study. I further thank my parents, Tan Tak Men and Mong Kwai Bee who have always been there for me, giving me all the love and encouragement and always encouraging me not to give up on what I dream of. Both of them instilled in me a strong belief in the value of education. I am thankful to my siblings, Luen Khai, Luen Leng, Luen Hooi and Chien Yean who consistently provided me with love and encouragement. I also thank to Sean Lee and all my friends and colleagues for their understanding, support and motivation.

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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MALAYSIAN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES**

BY

**TAN LUEN PENG**

**March 2013**

**Chairperson : Professor Datuk Dr. Raduan Che Rose**  
**Faculty : Graduate School of Management, UPM**

Undoubtedly, today private universities are mounting their efforts to become competitive in international arena. Private universities are currently embarking drastic restructuring mechanisms to sustain their competitiveness in the industry. Thus, the works of the academicians have become more challenging than before and they are expected to be productive at the same time. Element such as trust is essential to the creation and maintenance of conducive and enjoyable working environment in private universities.

Although the relationship between trust and work performance have often been examined in other parts of the world, there is little empirical evidence to support this standpoint from the Malaysian perspective. The objectives of this study is to examine the relationship between trust and work performance and the moderating effect of

monitoring mechanisms and communication on the relationship between trust and work performance in Malaysian private universities.

The conceptual framework used in this study was tested using empirical data from 300 full-time academicians from Malaysian private universities. Stratified proportionate random sampling technique was used in this study and data from the survey were analyzed using Hierarchical Regression analysis. This study chooses hypothesis-testing or the explanatory design as the research design. Furthermore, this study is deductive in nature; consequently, a quantitative methodology by using survey (mail questionnaire) was employed. In addition, this study adopted the dimension of trust suggested by Mayer and Davis (1999); cognitive-based trust and affective-based trust dimensions questionnaire suggested by McAllister (1995) to measure trust. Moreover, this study adopted the dimension of communication suggested by Johlke and Duhan (2000) to measure communication and monitoring mechanisms suggested by McAllister (1995) to measure monitoring mechanisms. This study adopted the dimension of work performance suggested by Kathiraveloo, Uli, Samah, Othman, Ali, Hassan and Shaffri (2010) to measure work performance. Six institutional characteristics were employed in this study: gender, age, ethnic, tenure, qualification, and position.

Results of the analysis indicated that there was a moderate level of trust, monitoring mechanisms and communication perceived by the academicians. However, the academicians in Malaysian private universities perceived that there was a high level of work performance and generally agreed that they were able to accomplish their work tasks to attain the goals set forth by the universities. Moreover, results of the



analysis indicated that there is a positive relationship between trust and work performance. In addition, this study has also identified the relationship between individual trust dimensions namely trustworthiness, cognitive-based trust and affective-based trust and work performance. All the three dimensions of trust were found to have positive relationship with work performance. This implies that generally, trustworthiness, cognitive-based trust and affective-based trust are significant predictors of academicians' work performance.

The results of this study revealed that there was a moderating effect of monitoring mechanisms on the relationship between trust and work performance. 8.7% increase in variance in the work performance was due to the moderating effect of monitoring mechanisms. This finding provides empirical support for the moderating effect of monitoring mechanisms on the relationship between trust and work performance. As such, the empirical evidence has contributed to the body of knowledge of trust specifically as there is still lack of empirical research evidences by examining the moderating effect of monitoring mechanisms on trust and work performance.

This results of this study also revealed that there was a moderating effect of communication on the relationship between trust and work performance. 6.8% increase in variance in the work performance was due to the moderating effect of communication. The finding of this study is pivotal in extending the notion of communication as a moderator on trust by incorporating multidimensional measurement of communication to holistically capture the essence of communication, especially its moderating role on trust and work performance.

An important management implication of this study is that it facilitates the top level management by providing empirical information, which supports the vitality of trust cultivation and development and its positive influence on the academicians' work performance, particularly in the Malaysian private universities. On the other hand, it is essential for the top management of the university to concentrate on the necessity of imposing monitoring mechanisms on the academicians. Moreover, the heads of department should encourage frequent communication with the academicians to understand the work problems that exist and their needs as well as expectations of the academicians toward the heads of department and vice versa. In addition, the findings from this study would fill the vacuum in the body of knowledge concerning trust, monitoring mechanisms, communication and work performance.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia  
Sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**HUBUNGAN ANTARA KEPERCAYAAN, MEKANISME PEMANTAUAN,  
KOMUNIKASI DENGAN PRESTASI KERJA DALAM KALANGAN TENAGA  
AKADEMIK UNIVERSITI SWASTA DI MALAYSIA**

OLEH

**TAN LUEN PENG**

**Mac 2013**

**Pengerusi :** **Profesor Datuk Dr. Raduan Che Rose**  
**Fakulti :** **Sekolah Pengajian Siswazah Pengurusan, UPM**

Kini, tidak dinafikan bahawa universiti swasta turut mengemblem usaha menaiktarafkan mutu pendidikan untuk bersaing dalam arena pendidikan antarabangsa. Universiti swasta juga dilihat secara drastiknya melakukan pengstruktur semula mekanisma yang digunakan bagi mengekalkan persaingan dalam industri pendidikan. Justeru, tugas tenaga akademik di universiti swasta dilihat semakin mencabar berbanding sebelumnya dan mereka juga dituntut untuk menjadi lebih produktif pada masa yang sama. Elemen kepercayaan dalam kalangan tenaga akademik dilihat sebagai teras utama dalam mencetus dan mengekalkan persekitaran tempat kerja yang kondusif dan menyeronokkan di universiti swasta.

Walaupun hubungan antara kepercayaan dengan prestasi kerja dalam kalangan tenaga akademik di universiti swasta telah pun diberikan penelitian di serata dunia, masih terdapat bukti secara empirikal yang menyokong kepentingan kajian ini dilihat dari perspektif tenaga akademik universiti swasta di Malaysia. Justeru, kajian ini

bertujuan untuk meneliti hubungan antara kepercayaan dengan prestasi kerja dalam kalangan tenaga akademik di universiti swasta di Malaysia dan kesan penggunaan mekanisma pemantauan dan komunikasi terhadap hubungan antara kepercayaan dengan prestasi kerja dalam kalangan tenaga akademik di universiti swasta di Malaysia.

Kerangka konsep bagi kajian ini telahpun diuji dengan menggunakan data empirikal yang diperoleh daripada 300 orang tenaga akademik sepenuh masa di universiti-universiti swasta di seluruh Malaysia. Teknik persampelan berstrata dan berkadar secara rawak telah digunakan untuk melaksanakan kajian ini. Manakala, kesemua data yang diperoleh menerusi tinjauan dalam kajian ini pula telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan Analisis Regresi Berperingkat. Kajian ini menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan pengujian hipotesis atau turut dikenali sebagai reka bentuk penjelasan. Selanjutnya, kajian ini merupakan kajian deduktif yang menggunakan reka bentuk penyelidikan kuantitatif sebagai metodologi kajian. Bagi tujuan pengumpulan data, kajian tinjauan telah dilakukan dengan menggunakan soal selidik menerusi emel. Selain itu, pengukuran kepercayaan dalam kajian ini telah dilakukan dengan mengadaptasi semula soal selidik dimensi kepercayaan yang disarankan oleh Mayer dan Davis (1999) dan McAllister (1995) iaitu dimensi kepercayaan berasaskan kognitif dan dimensi kepercayaan berasaskan afektif. Malah, pengukuran komunikasi dalam kajian telah dilakukan daripada adaptasi kajian Johlke dan Duhan (2000) bagi dimensi komunikasi. Manakala, bagi pengukuran mekanisma pemantauan pula dilakukan menerusi adaptasi daripada kajian McAllister (1995) bagi dimensi mekanisma pemantauan. Selain itu, kajian ini turut melakukan adaptasi daripada kajian Kathiraveloo, Uli, Samah, Othman, Ali, Hassan and Shaffri (2010) bagi

pengukuran dimensi prestasi kerja. Terdapat enam ciri-ciri institusi yang dilihat dalam kajian ini iaitu jantina, umur, etnik, tempoh kerja, kelayakan dan jawatan.

Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahawa tahap bagi kepercayaan, mekanisma pemantauan dan komunikasi dalam kalangan tenaga akademik adalah sederhana. Namun begitu, tenaga akademik di universiti swasta di Malaysia mempercayai bahawa terdapat tahap yang tinggi bagi prestasi kerja dan secara keseluruhannya mereka bersetuju bahawa mereka mampu untuk melaksanakan tugas mengikut sasaran yang telah ditetapkan oleh pihak universiti. Tambahan pula, dapatan kajian juga mendapati bahawa terdapat hubungan yang positif antara kepercayaan dengan prestasi kerja. Selain itu, dapatan kajian juga telah mengenal pasti adanya hubungan antara ketiga-tiga dimensi kepercayaan itu sendiri iaitu dimensi kebolehppercayaan, dimensi kepercayaan berasaskan kognitif dan dimensi kepercayaan berasaskan afektif. Kesemua dimensi kepercayaan ini menunjukkan hubungan yang positif dengan prestasi kerja tenaga akademik di universiti swasta. Hal ini membuktikan bahawa dimensi kebolehppercayaan, dimensi kepercayaan berasaskan kognitif dan dimensi kepercayaan berasaskan afektif mempunyai jangkauan yang signifikan dengan prestasi kerja tenaga akademik di universiti swasta.

Dapatan kajian ini juga membuktikan bahawa terdapat kesan perantaraan bagi mekanisma pemantauan ke atas hubungan antara kepercayaan dengan prestasi kerja. Varians bagi kesan perantaraan bagi mekanisma pemantauan dalam hubungan antara kepercayaan dengan prestasi kerja ini didapati meningkat sebanyak 8.7%. Dapatan ini memberikan bukti yang empirikal bahawa adanya kesan perantaraan mekanisma pemantauan dalam hubungan antara kepercayaan dengan

prestasi kerja. Kesimpulannya, bukti empirikal ini telah memberikan sumbangan terhadap khazanah ilmu berkaitan kepercayaan terutamanya kajian empirikal yang masih kurang dilaksanakan bagi meneliti kesan perantaraan bagi mekanisma pemantauan bagi kepercayaan dan prestasi kerja.

Selain itu, dapatan kajian juga menemukan bahawa terdapat kesan perantaraan bagi komunikasi dalam hubungan antara kepercayaan dengan prestasi kerja. Varians bagi kesan perantaraan bagi komunikasi dalam hubungan antara kepercayaan dengan prestasi kerja didapati meningkat sebanyak 6.8%. Hasil kajian ini adalah mustahak dalam melanjutkan kefahaman bahawa komunikasi adalah pengantar terhadap kepercayaan dengan menggabungkan ukuran multidimensi kepercayaan untuk member gambaran secara holistik terhadap kepentingan komunikasi, terutamanya peranan perantaraannya ke atas kepercayaan dan prestasi kerja.

Implikasi penting kajian ini adalah untuk menjadi fasilitator bagi pihak pengurusan tertinggi universiti dalam membantu membuat sebarang keputusan berkaitan kepentingan terhadap kultivasi dan pembangunan kepercayaan tenaga akaademik di universiti menerusi informasi yang bersifat empirikal. Kajian ini juga dilihat berupaya membantu pihak pengurusan tertinggi universiti memberikan pengaruh yang positif terhadap prestasi kerja dalam kalangan tenaga akademik di universiti swasta di Malaysia. Malah, implikasi kajian ini juga didapati mampu menjadikan pihak pengurusan tertinggi universiti memberikan fokus terhadap keperluan perlunya mekanisma pemantauan dalam kalangan tenaga akademik. Tambahan pula, ketua-ketua jabatan sewajarnya menggalakkan ahli akademik untuk berkomunikasi secara kerap sebagai usaha memahami masalah beban tugas sebagai tenaga akademik.

Hubungan komunikasi *vice-versa* antara ketua jabatan dengan tenaga akademik juga amat penting bagi membolehkan tenaga akademik dapat mencapai sasaran yang ditetapkan oleh ketua jabatan. Kesimpulannya, kajian ini dilihat berupaya untuk menambah dan memperkayakan khazanah ilmu yang memberikan perhatian terhadap kepercayaan, mekanisma pemantauan, komunikasi dan prestasi kerja dalam kalangan tenaga akademik di universiti swasta di Malaysia.



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I thank my dissertation committee with Professor Datuk Dr. Raduan Che Rose as Chair, and Professor Dr. Naresh Kumar and Professor Dr. Jegak Uli as member. These academicians were so inspirational, motivational and supportive in all its form to me. To all of the committee team, the gesture of putting at my disposal whatever I needed to complete this work would be cherished for the rest of my life.





I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 1 March 2013 to conduct the final examination of Tan Luen Peng on his thesis entitled "**Relationship Between Trust, Monitoring Mechanisms, Communication and Work Performance of Academicians in Malaysian Private Universities**" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.( A) 106] 15 March 1988. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy degree.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0. Introduction**

Globalization has altered landscape of today's universities around the world and it is becoming more intensified due to the sheer numbers of institutions and people involved. In most countries, higher education has become a large and complex enterprise. Moreover, universities and higher educational institutions have grown dramatically which require major expenditures of public and often private funds. Indeed, universities are being considered as the engines of a knowledge-based economy, as a complex, large and growing enterprise employing thousands of people to work. Thus, it is crucial to gauge the phenomenon of trust, monitoring mechanisms, communication, and work performance in Malaysian universities in attempts to provide better views on how these constructs interact with each other in this particular industry. Thus, this chapter presents the background of the study, the problem statements, research objectives and the research questions. This is followed by the significance of the study, definition of the terms used that make up the conceptual model, and summary.

#### **1.1. Background of the Study**

Nowadays, universities are undergoing immense change in order to becoming competitive in the global arena (Sohail, Rajadurai & Abdul Rahman, 2003; Altbach, 2002). The challenges are formidable. It is undeniable that most universities are now implementing drastic restructuring mechanisms to cater to the expectations of the stakeholders and, the market. The challenges of globalization and internationalization of

higher education are confronting Malaysia to implement effective transformations to sustain its global competitiveness as well as ensuring its ability to achieve the objective of becoming the educational hub in this region (Lee, 2004). Moreover, such objectives would not be materialized without the on-going support from the country's government. As such, governmental supports are the determining factor for successful transformation in Malaysian universities.

The Malaysian central government has allocated a substantial amount of money as much as RM 41,114 million under the Ninth Malaysian Plan (9MP) which spans the period from 2006 to 2010 into the educational industry; this clearly indicates the Malaysian governments' ambition to transform the nation to become a regional education hub with an internationally recognized tertiary segment (Kee, 2008). Furthermore, the Malaysian government is also anticipating that higher education will play a vital role in nation building especially in the economical and social development aspects because education is envisaged as an important guise of social force and it intertwines with the country's economic and political development process (Ahmat, 1980). Transforming Malaysia into a knowledge-based economy requires the country's higher education to provide a skilled and knowledgeable work force to build the nation's competitiveness in the region and the global arena.

From its inception, public universities in Malaysia have been traditionally responsible to provide tertiary education in post graduate and undergraduate. Nevertheless, the demand for university placement has increased and exceeded the available placement inside the public universities; this has led to the consideration for other sources to increase the

number of students to be admitted in tertiary education. There was no private universities was established in 1995. However, by 2009 there were 22 private universities including four foreign universities and 15 university-colleges in Malaysia ([www.mohe.gov.my](http://www.mohe.gov.my)). Moreover, the total number of students enrolled in Malaysian private higher institutions had increased dramatically. There were 294,600 students enrolled in the private higher institutions in 2002. However, in 2007, the number of students has surged by 24% contributing to 365,800 students in total (Marimuthu, 2008).

Adding to that, the diversification of educational institutions and programs of study had also contributed to the rapid expansion of private higher education. Furthermore, different modes of ownership from profit-oriented enterprises to non-profit organizations have also ventured into Malaysian education industry (Lee, 2003). Such phenomenon had emerged mainly because of the entry of ‘plurality of players’ (Tan, 2002). Profit-oriented institutions were formed by individual proprietors, consortia of companies, public listed and private companies. Non-profit institutions were set up by foundations, philanthropic organizations, and through community financing. Hence, the market focus of these private higher educational institutions varied due to the differences in the mode of ownership. As such, the private higher educational institutions have mushroomed and eventually altered the landscape of today’s higher education in Malaysia.

The Malaysian government has also acknowledged the importance of private higher institutions in providing the required skills and knowledge to the people in building the nation to achieve the vision 2020. Since 1995, the government has been actively supporting private higher education to develop distinctive education career path. The

governmental supports were essential and necessary due to the country's economy transformation, and the emphasis of the educational policy to build professional and skilled individuals (Sohail, Jegatheesan & Abdul Rahman, 2002). A statistic under The Ninth Malaysian Plan 2006-2010 (9MP) has revealed that the total output from public and private educational institutions at all levels of study increased from 130,161 in 2000 to 252,730 in 2005, of which 58.5% was from the private tertiary educational institutions. This clearly shows that there is a significant contribution made by the private higher educational institutions to the Malaysian tertiary education environment.

Before 2004, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is responsible to watch over the primary and higher educational institutions in this nation. Later that year, the development of higher education in public and private higher educational institutions was taken over by Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). The Private Higher Educational Institutional Act of 1996 was formed to govern the development of full fledge universities, the non-degree granting institutions and university colleges. National Accreditation Board (LAN) was responsible to approve all programs conducted by the universities (Lembaga Akreditasi Negara, n.d.). Besides, LAN is also responsible for formulating standard and policies to guarantee educational quality and accreditation of programs of the private higher educational institutions in order to conform to the international standards. Moreover, the governmental efforts in governing and supervising the quality of education provided by the higher educational institutions are essential to the development of the Malaysian educational industry by concentrating on the quality of education provided by the higher educational institutions in this nation. Thus, the Total Quality Management (TQM) was introduced in 1996 to control the educational quality

inside the universities to meet demand for graduates of high caliber and professionalism that are important towards the growth of a modern economy. However, the government has expressed the concerns of academic staff high turnover rate in the recent years, and the primary reason contributing to such phenomenon is that the academic staff has low employee commitment to their careers and university. Adding to this, the academic staff is also dissatisfied with the salary levels and promotion policies. Consequently, this raises another issue regarding the quality and status of the academicians in this nation's universities (Morris, Yaacob & Wood, 2004). Additionally, such phenomenon will eventually create negative effects to the university in its replacement costs and work disruption (Lew, 2009).

Furthermore, Malaysian universities are setting higher goals and objectives to improve the universities' standards in various aspects. Academicians are also confused on how to balance up their energy, focus and time between the responsibilities of teaching, research, publishing, supervision, community services, consultancy, administration and other tasks. In addition, academicians are also wondering on how to socialize themselves in a "bureaucratic" organizational culture (Abdul Wahat, Nasi & Omar, 2009). Hence, this has adversely affected the stress levels of the academicians of the university (Ahsan, Abdullah, Yong & Alam, 2009). Worse still, academicians have left educational industry for other industries with different purposes. For instance, the academicians are seeking for more meaningful experiences in the next position in other industry. Some academicians resigned from the present institutions to join the other institutions as a result of a better offer and it is also due to inability of the institution to manage job satisfaction effectively to retain its academicians (Wong & Teoh, 2009). Job satisfaction

is envisaged as a prerequisite to an educator's long tenure and performance which ultimately leads to overall effectiveness in institutions (Wood, 1976).

As highlighted by Noordin and Jusoff (2009) it is crucial for the universities and academic staff to work together to create a harmonious environment. However, academicians' attitudes are affected by other factors such as positive and safe working environment, a supportive administration, career progression, salary, work teams, peers, and the job itself. A certain level of autonomy should be given to academic staff to make decision as it is considered equally important. Decisions made by academicians will eventually affect the work environment inside the university. Psychological and emotional elements of the academicians should not be ignored by the top management of the university as these elements are vital in affecting the work performance of the academics. The university's management plays an important role in cultivating and creating a healthy environment for the academic staff to perform in order to attain the university's long term goals and objectives. The existence of a harmonious working environment in the university enables its academic staff to become cooperative and work as a team. However, the challenges remain in creating such a harmonious environment by the universities. Abu Samah and Kamaruzaman (2008) stressed on the importance of concentrating on the human factors of the universities including the public and private sectors. Academics, students and support staffs as well as stakeholders and other interested parties make up the composition of agents for change when Malaysian higher educational institutions continuously implement changes to become globally competitive. On the other hand, Sohail and Daud (2009) raised their concerns regarding the knowledge sharing barriers which exist among the academics in Malaysian



universities which is mainly due to lack of communication skills and social networks, differences in national culture, differences in position status, and lack of time and trust.

## **1.2. The Importance and Challenges of Malaysian Universities**

In order to transform Malaysia to become regional educational hub and to meet the market demands for skilled and knowledgeable professionals, drastic changes and adaptations need to be taken by the government to cater to such global demands. The expansion of higher education in this nation can be seen in a surge of number of higher educational institutions (HEIs); increase in student enrolment and government's spending; government policies to promote education for the need of human resources.

In the past, public universities were responsible to provide undergraduate and post graduate studies in Malaysia. Conversely, demands for higher educational opportunity have increased dramatically in recent years and eventually evolved the Malaysia educational system to become more market sensitive.

For the last twenty years, private higher institutions have been existed in Malaysia and the country's government had been supporting them to develop distinct and innovative education path (Arokiasamy & Ismail, 2008). Malaysia is now undergoing its transformation to its economical objectives which emphasizes the importance of educational policy to produce professional individuals (Sohail, Jegatheesan & Abdul Rahman, 2002).

According to Malaysia Education Development Plan 2001-2010, the development plan for private higher education intended to provide more opportunities for tertiary education to reduce the number of students studying abroad, help promote Malaysia as a center of academic excellence, reduce government's funding costs for tertiary education, and encourage private higher education institutions to undertake R&D activities.

Moreover, the Malaysian government is envisioning to develop the nation by the year 2020 with the anticipation that the public and private sector would channel their full support in order to achieve the national vision. Therefore, private higher educational institutions in Malaysia have developed strategies and policies to meet the demand for new graduates to be equipped with capability and professionalism which is important to the nation's future growth. Despite the governments' efforts in transforming the nation's higher educational industry to become globally competitive, there are still some internal issues or problems exist in the higher educational institutions which need urgent resolutions. For instance, Morris et al. (2004) expressed their concerns on the high turnover rate of academicians in Malaysian private universities. Their research revealed that that from 1985 to 1993, at least 1,500 academic staff had left higher educational institutions in Malaysia for more lucrative careers in other sectors. Adding to this, Hashim and Awang (2005) highlighted that many academicians are isolationists and they seldom interacted with other people and hence, these academicians generally lack trust even within their group members.

According to Abu Samah and Kamaruzaman (2008), the universities in Malaysia are going through changes in order to achieve world recognition. However, when

implementing these changes, it is equally crucial for the leaders/managers in such institutions to concentrate the emotional shifts among academicians by concentrating on trust creation to bring their institutions to higher grounds as people inside institutions especially academicians are perceived to be important agent of change. Addressing the vitality of change would enable the academicians to work together and ultimately achieve their shared vision for their universities.

### **1.3. Challenges For Academicians in Malaysian Universities**

Academicians' profession is crucial for the success of any higher education because a successful higher educational institution depends on a well-qualified, dedicated and adequately remunerated professoriate. Furthermore, in today's university environment, there are many roles played by the academicians; which includes teaching, conducting research, and providing services to the universities and communities (Lee & Boud 2003; Coaldrake & Stedman, 1999). Besides, academic administration has become more diverse as institutions are becoming larger and more complex. Higher educational institutions are expected to provide more services and offer more specialties and hence, eventually increase the need to provide skilled management and administration (Altbach, 2002). Rapid expansion of the higher education sector including the diversity of academicians and economic pressures reflect the changing of social conditions in the academy (Poole & Bornholt, 1998). Furthermore, the expansion and transformation of higher education has adversely affected the academicians' adaptability. Instead, they have stretched their work to meet such demands. Academic work is always tightly associated with teaching, research and service as an integral part of any academicians' work functions. Coaldrake (1999) mentioned that other tasks such as course coordination

or managing a department or school are distractive to academicians as these tasks have obfuscated the main role of the academicians which have also diverted the initial intention or purpose of the formation of the university – teaching and research.

Furthermore, a case study conducted Muhammad (2005) revealed that the nature of work of academics in the university has changed into research and service oriented rather than teaching. Therefore, the academicians in UiTM are not satisfied and confused with such conflicting expectations which carry diverse implications for the nature of work in which the academicians should engage. Additionally, Muhammad (2005) also found that the academicians in UiTM have high workload and stress because the academicians are not only expected to teach but also involve themselves in research, freelance work, administrative tasks, and professional growth activities. Such circumstances have eventually created job dissatisfaction among the academicians in UiTM.

Moreover, Abdullah and Lim (2001) mentioned that Malaysian organizations are now encouraging more individual initiatives and responsibilities. Organizations are attempting to promote the senses of independent thinking, team work, interdependence and group cooperation among their employees. Thus, trust becomes the fundamental guise in relationship building and maintenance. Therefore, it has become a challenge for the superiors and managers of organizations to cultivate such virtuous relationships with their subordinates and the employees will demonstrate their loyalty, respect, admiration and a willingness to identify with them (Abdullah & Gallagher, 1995). Furthermore, Azman, Sirat and Ali Samsudin (2013) agreed that academicians' work performance and satisfaction would increase when mutual trust is established among faculty members

through better communications inside the university. In addition, Hashim and Awang (2005) also highlighted that when trust exists among academicians through high levels of interaction, it would enable academicians to reduce conflicts and eventually increase the levels of work performance of the academicians. Simmons and Lies (2001) posited that when a university is operating under a high-trust environment, the academicians are able to perform better in their work as the academicians are able to work independently and they tend to have better collegiality. Moreover, Jain, Sandhu and Sidhu (2007) also highlighted that trust is an important aspect in developing effective knowledge sharing activities among academicians in university. Effective knowledge sharing is crucial for the career success of a particular academician and will eventually lead to better work performance. Sirat, Kipli, Singh, Augustine, Goh and Jusoff (2009) mentioned that the emergence of a climate of trust among academicians in a university is paramount because a trusting climate serves as an important determinant of attitudes towards continuous personal growth and development. Hence, this would increase the work performance of the academicians.

The researcher has observed that there is limited empirical research conducted on trust of academicians in Malaysian university context. Thus, this study focuses on the empirical examination on the phenomenon of trust in the Malaysian private university context.

Moreover, other relevant organizational dimensions namely - monitoring mechanisms, communication, and work performance are also examined in this study in an attempt to provide empirical evidence on how these dimensions relate with each other.

On the contrary, most studies were conducted in developed nations for instance, the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States of America which highlighted and revealed the vitality of trust in the educational industry in propagating various organizational performances which includes lower intention to leave, higher job satisfaction, and commitment among the academicians in such countries (Hill, 2000; Winter & Sarros, 2001; Huff & Kelley, 2003). Hence, this study is considered paramount and timely to gauge the phenomenon of trust as well as other dimensions of monitoring mechanisms, communication, and work performance in the Malaysian universities context.

Furthermore, the researcher posits that the findings of this study, specifically pertaining to the perceptions of trust of the academicians towards their heads of departments in the Malaysian university context would somehow contradict the prior researches conducted by Yamagishi et al. (1998); Huff and Kelley (2003) and Chua et al. (2009) because Malaysians are generally relationship oriented as this nation is classified as collectivist society. Moreover, it is also anticipated that trust will have significant relationship with work performance of the academicians despite the presence of moderate levels of trust among academicians.

#### **1.4. Problem Statement**

For decades, the topic of trust has received prolific focus by organizational theorists (Gambetta, 1988; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman., 1995; Lewicki & Bunker, 1995; Lane & Bachmann, 1998). The proliferation of research conducted by prior researchers (McAllister, 1995; Zaheer, McEvily, & Perrone, 1998; Schoorman, Mayer & Davis,

2007) has advanced the understanding and knowledge of trust. Trust has been extensively studied in diverse disciplines ranging from sociology, psychology, economics, and political science as well as the newer discipline such as neuroscience (Adolphs, 2002).

However, the understanding on the role that trust plays in higher educational industry has been extremely limited (Vidovich & Currie, 2011). Although some researchers (Jones & George, 1998; Connell, Ferres & Travaglione, 2003; Morrow, Hansen & Pearson, 2004; Perry, 2004) have provided initial evidence on the predictive ability of trust on various dependent outcomes in different cultural environments, progress in this area has been hampered by a lack of compelling, overarching theories as well as few predictive studies mainly being anecdotal in nature. Thus, in acknowledging the potential roles of trust in Malaysian higher educational industry context, this study fills this void in the literature by examining the relationship between trust and work performance.

Sociological foundation of trust concentrates on the element of expectation and intentions (Rousseau & Tijoriwala, 1999) and it has inherently existed in an individual-level phenomenon (McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011). Individuals would evaluate whether others are worth to be trusted in a social relation. The concept of trustworthiness comprises of three distinct factors namely integrity, benevolence, and ability (Mayer et al., 1995). Frazier, Johnson, Gavin, Gooty and Bradley (2010) highlighted that the dimension of trustworthiness has received little attention by researchers and ignored its importance in trust measurement. The conception of trust is built on the ground of social

exchange. Hence, an individual's perception towards another party's trustworthiness is equally important for trust to emerge. Trustworthiness is envisaged as a trustee's quality, while trust is an action conducted by trustor. Trustworthiness is pivotal to understand and predict the levels of trust (Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007). Hence, this study is initiated to fill this gap by including concept of trustworthiness into trust measurement.

However, from the psychological perspective, Lewis and Weigert (1985) argued and highlighted that cognitive and affective components are essential for trust dimension as trust is a multi-faceted dimension and it has affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions; which are combined or merged into an individual's social experience. Other researchers (Kramer, 1999; Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Zucker, 1986) have also acknowledged the importance of the cognitive and affective components in trust measurement. Moreover, it is useful to examine the cognitive and affective components in trust, in order to understand the reason of proneness of individual to trust. Schoorman et al. (2007) had also urged the future researcher to examine the affective component as a new dimension to the model of trust. Depending on the relationships that exist, cognitive or affective component might predict high levels of trust. Therefore, this study is initiated to fill this void by incorporating concepts of cognitive and affective into trust measurement.

One underdeveloped yet promising research area that is capable to fill the void in trust literature is the monitoring mechanisms. Monitoring mechanisms are viewed as processes of regulation of a partner's behaviors or its outcomes for the achievement of organizational goals (Wathne & Heide, 2000). In addition, trust of employees toward



supervisors is related with actual monitoring processes conducted by the supervisors (Stanton, 2009). There is limited study in investigating the moderating role of monitoring mechanisms on trust and work performance, the moderating effect of monitoring mechanisms on trust is important for both theoretical and practical reasons (Schweitzer & Ho, 2005). The relationship between monitoring mechanisms and trust is intricate; however, research into this relationship has given obfuscated interpretations of how these two dimensions relate (Das & Teng, 1998). The inconsistencies in past results reveal that there is deficiency of understanding about the moderating effects of monitoring mechanisms on trust. Hence, Ferrin, Bligh and Kohles (2007) urged the researcher to study the moderating effect of monitoring mechanisms on trust to enhance the understanding specifically on the relationship between monitoring mechanisms and trust. In this study, the researcher hence adopted the concept of monitoring mechanisms to examine the moderating effect of monitoring mechanisms on trust and work performance in the Malaysian private universities. Furthermore, the dimension of monitoring mechanisms comprise of two distinct variables namely control-based monitoring and need-based monitoring; whereby these two variables reflect the consequences or outcomes of monitoring behavior. This study therefore attempts to examine the moderating effect of monitoring mechanisms (control-based monitoring and need-based monitoring) on trust and work performance.

Another related gap exists in our knowledge of trust is the moderating effect of communication. According to Fulmer and Gelfand (2012), communication is an important aspect between trustor and trustee in trust development at the individual level. Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard and Werner (1998) theorized that managerial behaviors such

as openness in communication will affect employees' trust in their managers. Moreover, Gomibuchi (2004) posited that communication has moderating effects on trust and other dependent variables. The level of trust can differ in terms of its strength, importance and range which is associated with the level of communication between trustee and trustor. Moreover, Becerra and Gupta (2003) conducted a research on the moderating effect of communication on trust and employees' job performance and found that communication has a moderating effect on trust and job performance. Furthermore, Ferrin et al. (2007) argued that the trust is moderated by the level of communication between parties, which then provides a stronger or weaker foundation for future trust. In a supervisor-employee relationship, communication is envisaged as one of the most powerful supervisory behaviors. In addition, Zeffane, Tipu and Ryan (2011) urged the future researchers to examine the moderating effect of communication on trust. Hence, envisaging the dimension of communication as a multi-faceted construct, in this study, the dimension of communication comprises of the variables of informal communication mode, indirect communication content, communication frequency, and bidirectional communication to examine the moderating role of communication on the relationship between trust and work performance in the Malaysian private universities.

In addition to the above issue, there is a serious scarcity of literatures on trust study in Malaysian higher educational industry context. Despite the immense efforts channeled into this industry by the government to build this country to become an educational hub. The lack of study on trust especially inside the university is quite surprising. Existing research appears to focus on highlighting the knowledge sharing (Sohail & Daud, 2009), Total Quality Management (Kanji & Tambi, 1998; Sohail et al., 2003). In an effort to

become an international educational hub, the knowledge on academicians trust and work performance in the Malaysian context is indeed fruitful for Malaysian universities specifically private universities to promote conducive, cooperative and trusting atmosphere inside the university. In addition, this study would also shed light onto the academicians trust and work performance so that appropriate mechanisms can be put in place to cultivate and promote trusting environment in various critical fields in Malaysia.

Responding to the above gaps in the literature, the present study therefore develops and tests a comprehensive model that explores the relationships that exist among Trust, Monitoring Mechanisms, Communication and Work Performance.

As such, this study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- a. Is there a positive relationship between trust and work performance?
- b. Is there a positive relationship between trustworthiness and work performance?
- c. Is there a positive relationship between cognitive-based trust and work performance?
- d. Is there a positive relationship between affective-based trust and work performance?
- e. Do monitoring mechanisms moderate the relationship between trust and work performance?
- f. Does communication moderate the relationship between trust and work performance?

### **1.5. Objective of the Study**

The general objective of this study is to examine the phenomenon of trust in Malaysian private universities.

The specific objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To examine the level of trust, monitoring mechanisms, communication, and work performance among academicians in Malaysian private university.
2. To examine the relationship between trust and work performance among academicians in Malaysian private university.
3. To examine the moderating effects of monitoring mechanisms on the relationship between trust and work performance.
4. To examine the moderating effects of communication on the relationship between trust and work performance.

### **1.6. Scope of the Study**

This study is confined to examining the relationship between trust and work performance with two distinct moderating variables – monitoring mechanisms and communication. It would be too ambitious to cover other contextual factors such as organizational culture and structure, management style and etc even though these factors might have certain degree of effects on trust and work performance and thus serve as moderating variables in future research. Hence, other contextual factors would not be

considered or incorporated in this study except the dimensions of monitoring mechanisms and communication.

The research objective of this study is to empirically examine the phenomenon of trust among the academicians in Malaysian private universities toward their heads of departments. There are fourteen private universities in Malaysia, which have been identified and classified by the Ministry of Higher Education of Malaysia (Kementerian Pengajian Tinggi Malaysia, 2010). The full-time academicians of these private universities in Malaysia are selected as the respondents for this study.

### **1.7. Definition of Terms**

The following definitions are provided to ensure a common understanding of the terms used.

**Trust:** "... willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party." (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 712). In this study, trust is a multidimensional construct to measure perception of trust among the academicians which comprise the dimensions of trustworthiness, cognitive-based trust, and affective-based trust.

**Work Performance:** Performance is widely agreed to be multifaceted concepts (Suliman, 2001). Somers and Birbaum (1998) suggested that using multiple dimensional scales to study performance relationship with other variables is necessary to examine and understand the nature, significance, and strength of these relationships. In this

study, work performance is a multidimensional construct to measure overall academicians' work performance which includes the dimensions of quantity of work, quality of work and timeliness.

**Monitoring Mechanisms:** Processes of regulation of a partner's behaviors or its outcomes for the achievement of organizational goals (Wathne & Heide, 2000). In this study, the dimension of monitoring mechanisms comprise of two distinct dimensions namely need-based monitoring and control-based monitoring to measure the overall perceptions of monitoring imposed on the academicians by the university.

**Communication:** The process of transmitting information from one person or place to another (Williams, 2008). In this study, communication is a multidimensional construct which comprises of four distinct constructs namely informal communication mode, indirect communication content, communication frequency, and bidirectional communication flows to measure the overall perceptions of communication of academicians with their head of departments in the university.

### **1.8. Significance of the Study**

First, there is still a lack of empirical studies conducted on trust construct in the Malaysian setting. Following the arguments of McEvily and Tortoriello (2011) to validate trust measurements, therefore, Malaysian universities are the best platform to further validate trust measure given the fact that Malaysian universities are going through intense changes in becoming more competitive in the global arena. Consequently, such a competitive environment might affect the trust perceptions among

academicians. Azman, Sirat and Ali Samsudin (2013) highlighted that generally, Malaysian universities are imposing control over the academics' works and this indicates a "low-trust" management style and this is mainly due to the consequences of managerialism focusing on autonomy and professionalism and adversely affect the academic practices. Furthermore, Goh and Sandhu (2013) also found that trust is low among academicians in Malaysian universities in terms of knowledge sharing and this indicates that the emotional bonding among academicians is also low. Hence, this will further enhance the generalizability of trust in predicting work performance of academicians in Malaysian university. In addition, the result of this study is significant to add to the body of knowledge, specifically in the field of trust studies. Furthermore, it is hoped to create awareness among Malaysian universities on the importance of cultivating trust inside their institutions.

Secondly, this study will contribute to the ongoing development and validation of trust construct. Researchers in this area have adequately addressed the measurement issues of Trust (Mayer et al., 1995; Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). Despite this development, researchers have consistently suggested the need for more research in this area in order to well establish the trust construct. According to McEvily and Tortoriello (2011, p. 33) "...trust is considered a multifaceted construct. Given its complexity, in many circumstances it would seem appropriate to operationalise trust as a multi-dimensional construct and empirically assess the extent to which distinct dimensions exist and the nature and degree of their relationship to each other." Responding to this need, the present study will further enhance trust measurement by including the variables of

trustworthiness, affective-based trust and cognitive-based trust, in attempts to provide more conclusive measurement of trust.

Thirdly, this study contributes to the trust literature by examining whether monitoring mechanisms moderates the relationship between trust and work performance of academicians. Previous trust researches imply that monitoring leads to increased cooperation (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001; McAllister, 1995), but few studies have focused on the moderating role of monitoring mechanisms on trust (Ferrin, Bligh & Kohles, 2007). Thus, the examination of a moderating role of monitoring mechanisms on the relationship between trust and work performance may deepen our knowledge about the surveillance control mechanisms that are responsible for the relationship between the academicians' trust and work performance.

Fourthly, this study attempts to advance the current literature by examining whether communication moderates the relationship between trust and work performance of academicians. Prior researchers have frequently utilized the variables such as communication frequency and communication openness in examining the moderating effect of communication on the relationship between trust and various dependent variables have obfuscated the understanding and knowledge of the moderating role of communication on trust (Zeffane, Tipu & Ryan, 2011). Communication is a multi-faceted dimension and expanding the measurement of communication is necessary to improve the reliability of the measurement of communication (Ruppel & Harrington, 2000) on trust. Hence, in this study, the dimension of communication comprises of four distinct variables namely communication frequency, informal communication mode,



indirect communication content, and bidirectional communication flows in an attempt to provide deeper understanding of the moderating role of communication on the relationship between trust and work performance.

Fifthly, the present study also has practical implications for the management of Malaysian universities. Azman et al. (2013) urged that Malaysian universities need to create new mechanisms to resolve problems by establishing better communication and cultivate mutual trust between the faculty and administrators. Moreover, Abu Samah and Kamaruzaman (2008) also mentioned that fostering trust by the management inside university is important in order to ensure the transformation of university to become a success. The present study, suggests that the management team in Malaysian universities should consider the importance of trust to be merged and cultivated as trust facilitates cooperation and ultimately produce better work performance among academicians which in turn benefits the university in the long run.

Sixthly, if the research provides evidence on the moderating effects of monitoring mechanisms and communication on the relationship between trust and work performance, then it directly provides practical contribution to the management teams of Malaysian universities by suggesting to systematically and meticulously design the surveillance and control mechanisms to be imposed on the academicians. Such mechanisms might affect the level of trust among academicians toward their heads of department and ultimately affect their work performance. Monitoring mechanisms have negative connotation and academicians might perceive that their behaviors inside the university are being monitored and controlled to reduce opportunistic behaviors. On the

contrary, the relationship between trust and work performance of academicians might also be influenced by communication. The frequency, content and mode of communication utilized by the heads of department would also affect the levels of trust and work performance of the academicians.



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