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MEDIATING EFFECT OF FELT OBLIGATION BETWEEN PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR OF ACADEMIC STAFF

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By

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MEDIATING EFFECT OF FELT OBLIGATION BETWEEN PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORT, EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP PRACTICES AND ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOR OF ACADEMIC STAFF

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July 2020

Chair   : **Ramli bin Basri, PhD**
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This study examined the mediating effect of felt obligation on relationships between perceived organizational support, exemplary leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff. As highlighted in the Social Exchange Theory, this study explores academic staff' felt obligation to reciprocate positive and productive actions when they received favourable treatment demonstrated by leaders and the organizations in the form of organizational citizenship behaviors. This study employed a quantitative descriptive survey whereby a total of 372 academic staff from five Research Universities were selected as samples for the study. A stratified random sampling (proportional) method was applied in the sampling selection. An instrument consisting of 69 items were used to measure academic staff's perceptions towards their level of organizational citizenship behavior (24-items), perceived organizational support (8-items), exemplary leadership practices (30-items), and felt obligation (7-items) at the workplace. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical tools, such as frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation, while seven (7) research hypotheses were formulated and tested using inferential statistical tools, such as Pearson correlation. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) analysis was employed to test and establish the existence of convergent validity and discriminant validity of the measures. Prior to the utilization of the structural model, the measurement model confirmed the appropriateness of the data was at $\chi^2 (238) = 483.294$, p = 0.001, $\chi^2/df = 2.031$, GFI = 0.901, TLI = 0.944, CFI = 0.952; IFI = 0.952, RMSEA = 0.053. Thus, the data fit the model. The descriptive analysis revealed that the level of all variables examined in this study were high [organizational citizenship behavior (mean = 5.91, SD = 0.56); exemplary leadership practices (mean = 7.48, SD = 1.67); felt obligation (mean = 6.03, SD = 0.74)] except for the variable of perceived organizational support (mean = 4.80, SD = 1.10) where it was reported as a moderate level. Additionally, the inferential statistical analysis found that none of the demographic variables was significantly related to organizational citizenship behavior. However, based on

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structural path analysis, it was discovered that all hypotheses were supported. Therefore, the standardized path coefficient showed that the proposed mediational model had a good fit. The goodness of fit indices was summarized as: $\chi^2 (48) = 94.518$, $p < 0.001$, $\chi^2/df = 1.969$, AGFI = 0.934; TLI = 0.974, CFI = 0.981; IFI = 0.981, RMSEA = 0.051. Thus, the proposed mediation model was proven fit as RMSEA met the cut-off point 0.051, which appropriately fell between the required ranges of acceptability. Based on this result, this study concluded that perceived organizational support and exemplary leadership practices were confirmed as contextual factors among academic staff that would significantly contribute to their level of citizenship behavior toward the organization they served for. Similarly, through felt obligation, the relationships between perceived organizational support, exemplary leadership practices, and organizational citizenship behavior were mediated among academic staff. Hence, the research model confirmed the theory that academic staff's organizational citizenship behavior appears to reciprocate with their perception of perceived support by the organizations and exemplary leadership practices by their Heads of Department as well as the influence of their felt obligation. In conclusion, these findings may benefit and can be used by policymakers and administrators to improve the level of perceived support of academic staff and empower leadership practices at the departmental level. Through these improvements, academic staff's organizational citizenship behavior can be encouraged and their sense of felt obligation can be enhanced in Research Universities, Malaysia.

Keywords: Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Perceived Organizational Support, Exemplary Leadership Practices, Felt Obligation, Academic Staff, Research Universities

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk Ijazah Doktor Falsafah

KESAN PENGANTARA RASA BERKEWAJIPAN DI ANTARA PENERIMAAN SOKONGAN ORGANISASI, AMALAN KEPEMIMPINAN TELADAN DAN TINGKAHLAKU KEWARGANEGARAAN ORGANISASI DALAM KALANGAN STAF AKADEMIK

Oleh

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Julai 2020

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Kajian ini bertujuan mengenal pasti kesan pengantara rasa berkewajipan di antara penerimaan sokongan organisasi, amalan kepemimpinan teladan dan tingkahlaku kewarganegaraan organisasi dalam kalangan staf akademik. Sebagaimana dinyatakan di dalam Teori Pertukaran Sosial, kajian ini meneroka rasa berkewajipan dalam kalangan staf akademik untuk membalas tindakan positif dan produktif apabila mereka menerima perlakuan baik yang ditunjukkan oleh pemimpin dan organisasi melalui tingkahlaku kewarganegaraan organisasi. Kajian ini menggunakan kaedah tinjauan deskriptif kuantitatif dimana sejumlah 372 staf akademik daripada lima universiti penyelidikan telah tepilih sebagai sampel kajian ini. Kaedah persampelan rawak berstrata (berkadaran) telah digunakan bagi tujuan pemilihan sampel kajian. Instrumen kajian terdiri daripada 69 item yang digunakan bagi mengukur persepsi staf akademik terhadap tahap tingkahlaku kewarganegaraan organisasi (24-item), penerimaan sokongan organisasi (8-item), amalan kepemimpinan teladan (30-item), dan rasa berkewajipan (7-item) di tempat kerja. Data yang telah dikumpul dianalisis menggunakan alat statistik deskriptif seperti frekuensi, peratusan, purata, dan sisihan piawai, manakala tujuh (7) hipotesis kajian telah diformulasi dan diuji dengan menggunakan alat statistik inferensi seperti korelasi Pearson. Analisis Model Persamaan Struktural (SEM) digunakan bagi menguji dan menentukan kewujudan kesahan konvergen dan kesahan diskriminan dalam pengukuran. Sebelum penggunaan model struktur, model pengukuran mengesahkan kesesuaian data pada χ^2 (238) = 483.294, p = 0.001, χ^2/df = 2.031, GFI = 0.901, TLI = 0.944, CFI = 0.952; IFI = 0.952, RMSEA = 0.053. Oleh itu, data adalah sepadan dengan model kajian ini. Analisis deskriptif menunjukkan bahawa tahap kesemua pembolehubah dikaji adalah tinggi [tingkahlaku kewarganegaraan organisasi (min = 5.91, SP = 0.56); amalan kepemimpinan teladan (min = 7.48, SP = 1.67); rasa berkewajipan (min = 6.03, SP = 0.74)] kecuali bagi pembolehubah penerimaan sokongan organisasi (min = 4.80, SP = 1.10) di mana nilainya dilaporkan sebagai sederhana. Selain itu, analisis statistik

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inferensi mendapati kesemua pembolehubah demografi adalah tidak berhubung secara signifikan dengan tingkahlaku kewarganegaraan organisasi. Walau bagaimanapun, analisis laluan berstruktur mendapati bahawa kesemua hipotesis adalah disokong. Oleh itu, koefisien laluan piawai menunjukkan bahawa model pengantara yang dicadangkan adalah sepadan. Indeks kesepadanan diringkaskan seperti berikut: $\chi^2(48) = 94.518$, p < 0.001, χ^2/df = 1.969, AGFI = 0.934; TLI = 0.974, CFI = 0.981; IFI = 0.981, RMSEA = 0.051. Oleh itu, cadangan model pengantara terbukti sepadan apabila nilai RMSEA berada di titik pertemuan 0.051, yang mana nilainya berada sesuai dengan julat yang diterima. Berdasarkan keputusan kajian ini, dirumuskan bahawa penerimaan sokongan organisasi dan amalan kepemimpinan teladan adalah disahkan sebagai faktor kontekstual dalam kalangan staf akademik yang secara signifikan menyumbang kepada tahap tingkahlaku kewarganegaraan terhadap organisasi mereka berkhidmat. Begitu juga, pembolehubah rasa berkewajipan telah menjadi pengantara terhadap hubungan antara penerimaan sokongan organisasi, amalan kepemimpinan teladan dan tingkahlaku kewarganegaraan organisasi dalam kalangan staf akademik. Oleh itu, model kajian ini mengesahkan teori tingkahlaku kewarganegaraan organisasi dalam kalangan staf akademik adalah timbal balik kepada persepsi mereka terhadap sokongan yang diterima daripada organisasi dan amalan kepemimpinan teladan yang dipamerkan oleh ketua jabatan serta pengaruh rasa berkewajipan dalam diri mereka. Secara kesimpulannya, penemuan ini adalah bermanafaat dan boleh digunakan oleh pembuat dasar dan pentadbir institusi bagi memperbaiki tahap penerimaan sokongan organisasi dalam kalangan staf akademik dan memperkasa amalan kepemimpinan di peringkat jabatan. Melalui penambahbaikan ini, tingkahlaku kewarganegaraan organisasi dapat digalakkan dan berupaya meningkatkan rasa berkewajipan staf akademik universiti penyelidikan di Malaysia.

Kata kunci: Tingkahlaku Kewarganegaraan Organisasi, Penerimaan Sokongan Organisasi, Amalan Kepemimpinan Teladan, Rasa Berkewajipan, Staf Akademik, Universiti Penyelidikan

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Most sincerely,
Roshafiza Hassan
May 2020

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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Declaration by graduate student

I hereby confirm that:
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- this thesis has not been submitted previously or concurrently for any other degree at any other institutions;
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This is to confirm that:
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

OCBs	Organizational Citizenship Behaviors
POS	Perceived Organizational Support
ELP	Exemplary Leadership Practices
FO	Felt Obligation
RU	Research Universities
SEM	Structural Equation Modeling
AMOS	Analysis of a Moment Structures
SD	Standard Deviation
P	Significant Level
%	Percent
Df	Degree of Freedom
F	The Ratio of Two Variances in the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA)
n	Number of Sample Size
Cp	Sample Error at 5%
$Z^2\alpha$	1.96 at a Confidence Level of 95%
N	Population
P	Population Ratio
λ	Factor Loading
δ	Measurement Error
k^2	Kappa Squared
c'	Direct Effect of the Independent Variable
e	Corresponding Residuals
i	Intercepts

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1   Overview

Malaysia is a country that spends a large portion of the yearly budget allocation in the education sector. In the year 2019, the Ministry of Education received the biggest amount of RM60.2 billion allocation which represented 19.1 percent of total government spending (MOF, 2019). As one of the successful developing countries in the Southeast Asian region, Malaysia has taken extensive steps, especially in the education sector. From the perspective of higher education, the Malaysian government has taken an initiative by introducing the status of Research Universities (RUs) since early 2006 to empower the functioning of the local public universities. Research University (RU) is an educational institution that focuses more on research and development (R&D), innovation, and commercialization without neglecting its traditional roles in teaching and learning as well as professional services. The establishment of RUs is aligned with the objectives of the Malaysia Education Blueprint for Higher Education 2015–2025 (MEBHE) for Malaysian public universities to compete in a healthy competitive environment (MOE, 2015).

In line with the commencement of educational transformations in the higher education sector, particularly in Research Universities (RUs), academic staff's workloads have been continuously increased. Noor Ashikin, Asmah Laili, Nurli, and Rohana (2016) argued that the current change in the higher education sector requires academic staff to extend the amount of their time doing research and integrate research activities as well as their findings into the teaching and learning process. This proactive progress is considered as a catalyst to generate a dynamically competitive environment and possibly increase the quality and quantity of creativity and innovation among RUs in Malaysia. As a leading factor in the success or failure of a university, Altbach (2013) states that academic engagement is most demanded to ensure all programs such as teaching, learning, and research are well organized and managed. Commitment of the academic staff to proactively engage in activities at the workplace is most necessary as they are implementers of the mission and vision planned by the ministry and the top management of the universities.

According to the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (2014), the term 'academic staff' refers to professional and administrative employees with responsibilities and appointments that are most importantly related to academics and administration of higher education institutions. As professional members of strenuous institutions, academic staff not only deal with their inevitable workloads, but also have to proactively involve in contributing efforts beyond defined work roles. Hooi and Ali (2017) support this notion that academic tasks require extra efforts which vary from carrying out formal job duties. These extra efforts are not considered as part of their formal job descriptions nor rewarded by the official systems, yet still undoubtedly

dedicated to the organizational success. This term of activities is known as organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs).

As academicians, their determination to perform citizenship behaviors is something decent as they are the pillars in achieving the mission and vision planned by the management of the universities. To support this notion, Rose, Miller, and Kacirek (2016) state that accountable and knowledgeable academics, who are more engaged at the workplace, are more likely to perform well and be involved in discretionary behaviors to support their organization. Currently, employees with OCBs are more likely preferred by employers in the industry, and these behaviors have been discussed in various and broader perspectives.

Most of the previous literature on OCBs have stated that these behaviors categorically encompass five dimensions, namely altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy, and sportsmanship (Ueda, 2016; Organ et al., 2006; Podsakoff et al., 1990). Therefore, these dimensions were utilized in this study considering that this model was relevant to be applied in the higher education context, particularly among academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities. Although the superior focus of foregoing studies emphasized the antecedents' factor of OCBs, limited prior studies have highlighted the potential effect of perceived organizational support and leader's exemplary practices in empowering OCBs among academic staff in higher institutions.

Perceived organizational support is a term established in the Organizational Support Theory by developing the idea of organizational commitment towards the employees and how employers reciprocate the efforts of employees. The Organizational Support Theory (OST) was introduced in 1986 by Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, and Sowa. This theory describes employers of organizations should first satisfy their employees' socio-emotional needs through assuring that help will be accessible and reachable when necessary and designates the organizations' readiness to remunerate efforts made on its behalf. Organizational Support Theory also highlights and discusses the extent to which employees perceive support from their organizations.

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) stated that perceived organizational support can be described in three elements, namely supervisor support, fairness, as well as organizational rewards and job conditions. In higher education institutions, organizational support is demonstrated through the treatment given by the management to their academic staff, such as recognition, care, appreciation, and support for professional development. Therefore, perceived organizational support can be translated through academic staff's actions by how they respond when receiving all those treatments.

Furthermore, instead of looking entirely at organizational contributions, the leadership aspect may also influence the employees. To put it differently, leaders are individuals who are capable of influencing employees through the right approaches. Blau (1964) stated that when leaders are concerned about their employees, thereby this would

produce beneficial consequences. Moreover, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) mentioned the term 'reciprocity', in which leaders who are supportive and helpful towards their employees, in return, will stimulate employees to feel obliged to support their leaders back in achieving the organizational goals. Thus, good leadership practices are honorable deeds that need to be consistently done by leaders. As declared by Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie (2006), of particular interest to the success in OCBs' implementation, leaders are the ones who influence the OCBs of their followers. Leader influences could be seen as important to accomplish the organization's mission and vision.

At the university level, Bryman (2007) elaborated that leadership is split into two main categories which are institutional and academic. Institutional leadership review board approval is obtained from all participating institutions or university autonomy and is hierarchically commencing by the Board of Directors (BOD) followed by the Vice-Chancellors, the Senate, the Deans of Faculty, and the Heads of Department. Meanwhile, academic leadership is related to the rank positions, such as Professors, Associate Professors, Senior Lecturers, and Lecturers. This is, provided that, universities or higher education institutions are unique organizations that always encounter tensions, conflicts, and pertinent issues between academic freedom (academic leadership) and institutional obedience (institutional leadership). Even though the role of institutional leadership is vital, the power of academic freedom or academic leadership could not be disregarded as it is the fundamental philosophy upon which a university is established.

The role of Heads of the Department must also be highlighted when discussing the issues of leadership in higher education. The Heads of Department are individuals who bridge the gap in linking institutional and academic leadership (Fatemeh & Khadijah, 2013). They are also leaders who directly interact with academic and administrative members at the faculty level. As leaders, they are accountable for influencing academics' behaviors with appropriate leadership practices through engagement with subordinates. In highlighting this, Kouzes and Posner (2002) suggested five domains to enhance leadership practices. These are Model the Way, Inspire Shared Vision, Encourage the Heart, Enable Others to Act, and Challenge the Process.

The five domains of exemplary leadership practices anticipate to excel employees' effort towards achieving higher goals, efficiencies, and productivity of the organization. Probably, by implementing these practices, academic staff are more likely to value organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), yet realize the significance of OCBs as mutually beneficial. Blau (1964) in the "Social Exchange Theory" affirmed that organizations which provide support to employees, in turn, will find that employees reciprocate in the form of commitment and performance of great behaviors that are beneficial to the organizations. The main idea of this theory is expressed in terms of that employees who perceive and feel that their socio-emotional needs are fulfilled by the organizations, will possibly feel obliged to return the kindness of the organizations, resulting in the increase of the level of citizenship behavior.

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This study has portrayed the Theory of Social Exchange (Blau, 1964) in developing an understanding of the theoretical framework in the relationship between perceived organizational support, felt obligation, leadership practices by example, and OCBs. Overall, this chapter consists of the background of the study, problem statement, research objectives, research questions, hypotheses, significance of the study, scope and limitations, definition of terms, as well as a summary of the chapter.

1.2   Background of the Study

The history of public higher education institutions began from the 1960s as the institutions were controlled mainly by the state in terms of the guidelines on student intake and financial budget and regulations. In the late 90s, Malaysia was inclined towards the globalization and marketization of higher education (Wan, Morshidi, & Dzulkifli, 2015). The internalization of the institutions adds more nuance in provisioning what autonomy means at an organizational level in Malaysia's higher education sector. Currently, there is a transformation of higher education being introduced by the National Higher Education Strategic Plan (NHESP) 2007–2020 (Azman, Sirat, & Ahmad, 2014). Apart from that, NHESP has laid out the strategic plan of transforming five public higher education institutions into research universities (RUs) in the effort of conceptualizing world-class status universities (Lee, Sirat, & Wan, 2017b).

Research University (RU) is an institution that focuses on activities to promote research, development, innovation, and commercialization of products and services. In Malaysia, RUs have been established since early 2006 after the Ministry of Education formed an ad hoc committee comprising researchers from premier universities, purposely to formulate the policy on the establishment of an RU (Nasiibah et al., 2013). To be conferred the title as an RU, selected universities need to go through several eligibility evaluations as required by the appointed evaluators.

To date, five public universities in Malaysia have been conferred the title of Research University (RU). These universities are University of Malaya (UM), Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). The mission of establishing RUs was stated by the Ministry of Higher Education (2007) as the place to engage scholars and students actively in new explorations of ideas, expand innovations, intensify the quality and quantity of creativity and innovation, and take intellectual opportunities to discover the boundaries of knowledge. In general, the establishment of RU concentrates on leading the area of research and research development.

As driven by the universities' goal to maintain as RUs, academic staff need to work harder and fully utilize their knowledge and skills in performing tasks such as research collaborations, research innovations, research publications, research commercialization and planning for academic development as well their core activities of teaching and supervising students. These situations cause stress and burnout (Hooi & Ali, 2017)

experiences among most academics probably due to failure in handling tasks as a result of the increasingly high job requirements even though autonomy has been given to the universities in decision-making (Preymann, et al., 2016; Sufean & Chin, 2014). As academic leaders, they are the pillar of the academic field to the institutions, which certainly need academic freedom.

Although academic staff encounter various challenging tasks in their daily routine (Preymann et al., 2016), they are inclined to render ultimate commitments as well as intensive and extensive efforts to the organization. Their commitment as willingness to perform tasks beyond in-role formal job specifications are certainly desired by leaders and organizations. These include working overtime, helping new colleagues, organizing office-wide functions, complying with the rules and regulations, volunteering to change shifts or take over duties, handling students' needs and expectations, and many others regardless of the rewards, compensations, salary increments, or promotions. Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie (2006) identified organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) of which employees consider something more than quantifiable in performance appraisals. OCBs are about the individual being selfless and contributes something beyond his or her job scope for the success of the organization.

Employees with OCBs are willing to put extensive effort into their job, have high tolerability in representing the organization, as well as are highly desirable to remain as a member of the respective organizations. Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie (2006) proposed five major domains of OCBs which are altruism, courtesy, conscientiousness, civic virtue, and sportsmanship. As conceptualized by previous literature (Rose et al., 2016; Ueda, 2016; Dirican & Erdil, 2016; Organ et al., 2006), *altruism* is known as helping behavior which focuses on helping out colleagues in handling tasks, *courtesy* is about staying up on company policies, while *conscientiousness* is doing an exceptional job in one's role, *civic virtue* as an employee's behavior of being kind to colleagues, and finally *sportsmanship* which emphasizes on employees for not complaining about little inconveniences at the workplace. Essentially, OCBs are about employees' contributions to the organization that go beyond the main tasks assigned to them.

Several studies found demographic factors such as age, tenure of service, and rank positions in organizations significant in influencing the employees' level of OCBs. There was an example of empirical evidence which reported that employees with a longer term of service would have more knowledge related to the job scope and directly demonstrated high level of OCBs than short-term tenured or new colleagues. This might also be indirectly linked to their age (Dirican & Erdil, 2016; Hafidz, Hoesni, & Fatimah, 2012). Supposing that the older and longer-tenured employees are engaged in more OCBs, these employees will have more self-belonging toward the organizations compared to the newer ones. Concerning the rank positions, previous studies reported that the higher ones in an organization are more likely to regard citizenship behaviors as part of the job (Turnipseed & Vandewaa, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004). Hence, employees with OCBs would denote good behavior in performing not only in-role, but also out-role or non-task job specifications as they place priority for achieving organizational goals.

The idea of academic staff's citizenship behaviors in higher education institutions can be seen through their capability and willingness to go beyond performing the non-task duties. However, being functional as academics at social institutions, OCBs are noticed as crucial to be implemented. This fact is due to the current changes as argued by Altbach (2013) that the role of public universities is moving away from being largely social and educational to an economic model of institutions. Nonetheless, working in institutions that are governed under the Ministry of Higher Education, academics are urged to be fully committed in understanding and deepening the changes, as well as being adaptive to the environmental challenges (Noor Ashikin et al., 2016) in creating a better future for the Malaysian higher education system.

Although employees' behavior could determine organizational success, this is inadequate to solely examine employees' citizenship behavior towards their organization. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchinson, and Sowa (1986) suggested that employees form a common belief regarding the extent to which the organizations value their contributions. Hence, their welfare should be promoted and their hard work must be rewarded in order for them to meet the needs for affiliation and approval as members of the organization. Furthermore, Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) confirmed the suggestions derived from the employees' belief on how employers are concerned about them. These are operationalized as 'perceived organizational support'. Their study also indicated that high level of perceived support by the employees will later make them feel obliged to return their employers' efforts by engaging in behaviors that promote organizational success.

Perceived organizational support is conceptually rooted by the Social Exchange Theory (SET) which supports the idea of employer and employee relationship. The relationship is built upon the support of the organization which anticipates to produce an open-end social exchange relationship between both parties. Blau (1964) suggested that through mutual exchanges, a pattern of reciprocal obligation is established between the parties. Previously, Gouldner (1960) highlighted the term 'reciprocity' where employees are inclined to reciprocate with good attitudes such as having greater concern and developing affective commitment, as well as favorable work behaviors when they perceive high level of organizational support. Hence, to strengthen the relationship between employers and employees, it depends on the organization's willingness to support employees from the beginning. Reciprocally, employees will return to the organization in a positive manner, such as displaying citizenship behaviors (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Gouldner, 1960).

Perceived organizational support could induce positive work attitudes and behaviors of employees regarding reciprocal norms and obligations. A study by Lew (2009) suggested that perceived organizational support plays a significant role in improving academics' commitment toward the institutions. His study on academic staff in higher education institutions found that academic staff feel obliged to reciprocate to the organizations through having higher commitment, developing support by being concern about the organization's conditions and well-being, and serving to accomplish the organizational goals, too. On the other hand, Kim, Eisenberger, and Baik (2016), in their study, revealed that the higher the level of organizational support received by the

employees would later lead to higher level of obligation felt by them to respond kindly to the organization through contextual performance. Therefore, the treatment given by the employers to the employees would motivate them to grow efforts in achieving organizational goals and objectives.

As organizations cannot solely rely on a formal system of the job descriptions, trainings, or rewards to foster OCBs, Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) suggested that OCBs could be particularly affected by the leaders' behavior. As leaders, they, themselves, must first be a role model in showing-by-doing to their subordinates. Leading by example demonstrates that what leaders do matters more than words. This means that leaders must be clear on the directions of the organizations and make sure that their actions, as well as, what they preach are in line. Kouzes and Posner (2012) had outlined the importance of exemplary leadership practices in organizations, such as to foster collaboration, establish principled treatment of employees, create standards of excellence, set interim goals to allow incremental accomplishments, unravel bureaucracy that impedes action, provide direction for those unsure of succeeding steps or how to proceed, create opportunities for success, set an example for others to follow the pursuit of goals, and build spirited teams. Leaders' practices are important as to lead is not about personality, but their behaviors in an observable set of skills and abilities.

In higher education context, the aspect of authority leadership is in contrast to industrial organizations. The role of institutional leadership is crucial in determining the success of higher education institutions (Evans, 2011; Kouzes & Posner, 2007) as leaders must have the ability to overcome situational constraints in the organizations. As leaders, they must also understand new challenges that affect the quality of the university's service by improving their leadership competencies. However, institutional leadership cannot be dissociated from academic leadership (Preymann et al., 2016; Bryman, 2007). There is a harmonious connection between these types of leadership as it is an essential process that merely occurs within the interaction between the leaders (institutional) and the followers (academic implementers).

Northouse (2015) suggested that leadership can exist in a reciprocal process between employers and employees, whereby employers are someone who aspires to lead whereas employees are anybody who chooses to follow any given tasks. It is reciprocal and voluntary where leaders choose to lead and the followers agree to follow. In addition, evidence implies that leaders' practices may affect the level of citizenship behavior of the employees through felt obligation (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002; Eisenberger et al., 2001). Felt obligation is a sense of legitimacy and acceptability of the employees to reciprocate in goodwill after receiving fair treatment by their leaders.

In the context of Malaysian higher education system, leadership plays a significant role in determining the success of the institution. The Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 has clearly stated the role of leaders in public higher education institutions in Malaysia (Soaib & Sufean, 2012). The role of the Vice-Chancellor, all the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, the Deans of the Faculty, and all the Heads of the Campuses,

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Schools, Centers, Academies, and Institutes of the University, as well as Professors and Associate Professors as members of the Senate is so important and clearly defined by the University's Board.

However, the role of the departmental heads in escalating the university's goals cannot be neglected. The Heads of Department play a dual role of institutional and academic leaders (Altbach, 2011). As academic leaders, they must possess vast knowledge, have academic credibility, and follow the vision and mission of the respected institution. Potgieter, Basson, and Coetzee (2011) had outlined the roles of institutional leaders which include keeping up the pleasant culture, building a harmonizing environment, engaging with the staff, and focusing on achieving organizational mission and vision. By considering these, it shows that the Heads of Department would possibly influence their subordinates' behavior. In addition, Adebayo, Simin, and Megat Ahmad Kamaluddin (2018) agreed that leadership practices are considered as a significant indicator in measuring academics' OCBs.

As guided by the results of past and current research, as well as portrayed by the Theory of Social Exchange as a theoretical framework, this study examined the particular gap in the literature by further exploring the role of felt obligation in establishing these relationships. The findings of the study also expectantly reflected on a similar trend from the higher education viewpoints. Research on academics' OCBs has attracted interests, hence, this study attempted to understand the intensity and stability of their dedication to greatly perform the non-tasks at their organizations.

1.3   Problem Statement

The principles of RUs establishment are to foster research activities, develop soft skills, generate income, and bridge the gap between universities, communities, and industries (MOE, 2015). In line with the commencement of educational transformations in the higher education sector, especially in Research University (RU), academic staff's challenges have also increased. Some of the challenges faced by RUs are to obtain funding for research, increase number of students including at postgraduate level, attend students as consumers, balance research with teaching, deal with current issues involving students, as well as shift to e-learning (Altbach, 2013; Atkinson & Blanpied, 2008). These situations require them to utilize as many efforts as possible in meeting their expectations. To remain as a member, as well as to maintain great performances in completing tasks beyond the routine, thus these indirectly require them to have a strong attachment to the organization. These sorts of demands are known as 'citizenship behavior' (Hooi & Ali, 2017) where it is not prescribed in job descriptions, nor rewarded in the formal evaluation system. Rather, it is discretionary and optional to serve for the employing organizations.

Citizenship behavior towards the organization is important in predicting employees' sense of belonging and engagement toward the organization. In the context of higher education, the lack of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors (OCBs) among

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academicians could affect the effectiveness of the institutions. To support this notion, Rose, Miller, and Kacirek (2016) found that a high level of employees' OCBs would result in less complaints and resistance towards the changes by the management. Even though OCBs are difficult to assess in RUs due to some challenges such as governance, autonomy, funding, and academic system (Altbach, 2011), numerous studies have highlighted the significance of OCBs on organizational success. Besides, as RUs are currently striving to achieve academic excellence, therefore it is important to assess the level of OCBs among academics as they serve the needs of the society as well as the implementers of knowledge creation and dissemination.

In many circumstances, OCBs can only be implemented once the organizational support is well provided by the institution. With support from the organization, employees tend to display greater behaviors at the workplace with regards to the norm of reciprocity (Hilbe et al., 2018; Gouldner, 1960), the literature on perceived organizational support showed that employees will have a sense of belonging towards their organization when they feel obliged to perform through OCBs if full support from the organization is received (AlKerdawy, 2014; Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011; Lew, 2009; Ali et al., 2008), such as providing help and guidance to achieve individual and organizational goals. Conversely, low in exchange orientation will reduce concerns about obligations and also less likely to care if exchanges are not reciprocated between employees and the management of the organization. Perceived support is crucial in higher education institutions as it could motivate academic staff to remain in the organizations (Jebeli & Etebarian, 2015; Duffy & Lilly, 2013; Jain, Giga, & Cooper, 2013; Noruzy et al., 2011).

Leaders play an important role in dealing with challenges of change that results in employees to perform OCBs in the organizations. Previous studies showed that a leader's behavior highly contributed to employees' OCBs (Ueda, 2016; Colquitt et al., 2014; Al-Sharafi & Rajiani, 2013). In the context of RUs, Heads of Department (HoDs) are leaders who lead themselves, their constituents, units, and departments for the success of the institution at large instead of doing their core business that is teaching, learning, and research.

However, selecting the Heads of Department as academic leaders in a faculty is always challenging due to the capability of the candidates to perform complex or dual tasks which are administrative and academic (Barge, 2014; Gmelch, 2013; Middlehurst, 2012). In some cases, the issue of appointment as Heads of Department was complicated as they were not chosen based on the capacity of their leadership knowledge, skills, or abilities, which further added to these complexities. Al-Sharafi and Rajiani (2013) found that exemplary leadership practices are important in promoting OCBs among employees. Thus, as Heads of Department, they must behave decently in some manners as employees of good exemplary leaders will, in turn, feel obliged to reciprocate this sentiment in the form of OCBs (Adebayo et al., 2018; Ueda, 2016; Colquitt et al., 2014; Al-Sharafi & Rajiani, 2013).

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OCBs becomes important in Malaysian RUs as it could help academic staff to enhance the performance and achieve the development of the organization (Podsakoff et al, 2009). Besides, OCBs would allow academics to enhance their effectiveness and increase the level of productivity. Shanker (2018) found that competition among higher education institutions implies that staff must contribute themselves with a lot of activities in order to meet up with the complex situation and meet the requirement of the competitive global market. Therefore, OCBs could also be a benchmark for the policymakers, management party, and administrators in fostering quality academic staff that would create the RUs for better academic service delivery and development through identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the organization.

Several studies also revealed that OCBs were influenced by demographic factors, such as age (Dirican & Erdil, 2016), tenure of service (Hafidz et al., 2012), and rank of position (Turnipseed & Vandewaa, 2012; Bogler & Somech, 2004) held in an organization. Therefore, by identifying demographic factors, it may help leaders and organizations in handling diverse employees where OCBs can naturally occur. Even though considerable research has been devoted to perceived organizational support and exemplary leadership practices with OCBs (Colquitt et al., 2014; Magdalena, 2014; Podsakoff et al., 2000), less attention has been paid in the context of higher education, particularly in Malaysian RUs. Therefore, this study aimed to fill the gap by empirically examining felt obligation as a mediator in explaining these relationships performed by academic staff in Malaysian RUs as fixed by the Social Exchange Theory.

1.4   Objectives of the Study

The purpose of this study was to identify the level of academics' organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) in Malaysian Research Universities (RUs) seeing that they perceived the organization support and exemplary leadership practices in their institutions. Additionally, this study highlighted the role of felt obligation as a mediator variable. Particularly, the objectives of the study were as the following:

1. To identify the level of organizational citizenship behavior, perceived organizational support, exemplary leadership practices, and felt obligation of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.
2. To analyze the level of organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff based on demographic factors (gender, race, rank position, age, tenure of service in current department, and number of years serving the current Head of Department).
3. To examine the relationship between perceived organizational support and exemplary leadership practices with organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.
4. To explore the mediating effect of felt obligation between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.

5. To explore the mediating effect of felt obligation on the relationship between exemplary leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.
6. To investigate whether the relationships between perceived organizational support, exemplary leadership practices, felt obligation and organizational citizenship behavior fit with the measurement model.

1.5   Research Questions

This study was carried out to identify the level of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) of academic staff in five public Research Universities (RUs) in Malaysia. This study also investigated the underlying factors affecting academic staff's OCBs, namely perceived organizational support and exemplary leadership practices, as well as highlighted the role of felt obligation in strengthening these relationships. This study aimed to answer the questions as follows:

1. What is the level of organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities?
2. What is the level of perceived organizational support of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities?
3. What is the level of exemplary leadership practices of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities?
4. What is the level of felt obligation of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities?
5. Is there any significant difference in the level of organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities based on demographic factors (gender, race, position, age, tenure of service in current department, and the number of years serving the current Head of Department)?

1.6   Research Hypotheses

This quantitative study investigated the research hypotheses to answer questions and make predictions about what to expect from the results of the related variables. Creswell (2014) stated that hypothesis is a formal statement that presents the expected relationship between variables based on the examination of the literature. Therefore, the hypotheses of this study were as follows:

Hypotheses 1: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.

Hypotheses 2: There is a positive relationship between exemplary leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.

Hypotheses 3: There is a positive relationship between perceived organizational support and felt obligation of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.

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Hypotheses 4:   There is a positive relationship between exemplary leadership practices and felt obligation of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.

Hypotheses 5:   There is a positive relationship between felt obligation and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.

Hypotheses 6:   Felt obligation mediates the relationship between perceived organizational support and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.

Hypotheses 7:   Felt obligation mediates the relationship between exemplary leadership practices and organizational citizenship behavior of academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities.

1.7   Significance of the Study

This study of academics' organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) is beneficial as they belonged to the management of the institutions they served for. The findings of this study would help the management party and the administrators to identify their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the organization through the aspects of support provided, the exemplary leadership exhibited by the respective Heads of Department, and felt obligation to repay the organization's kindness as perceived by the academic staff. Felt obligation became the preferred mediator as it was found to be a catalyst in these relationships and reliant in the past and current literature reviews as found in the Theory of the Social Exchange.

Besides, the findings of this research would be beneficial for the Heads of the Department in Malaysian Research Universities to improve their leadership practices by example. The Heads of Department can also identify better ways to improve the support system in the administrative sections through appropriate leadership approaches. A support system is an important aspect to ensure that the faculty programs will go smoothly, as well as to support academic staff in implementing their job duties related to administrative matters (Jebeli & Etebarian, 2015; Duffy & Lilly, 2013; Jain, Giga, & Cooper, 2013). With that in mind, academic and administrative staff will feel inspired and appreciated as a member of the organization. These factors are vital for leaders to understand as the former would help the latter to consistently create a conducive working environment. The employees will be full of courage, feel accepted, and happy, as well as become motivated to perform better.

Based on critical reviews which have proposed the integration of a conceptual framework, this study becomes a noteworthy basis for the establishment of an extension for future research. In particular, this study is very helpful to be considered by institutional administrators, including Deputy Vice-Chancellors, Directors, and Deputy Directors of institutes or centers, Deans, and Deputy Deans in strengthening the underpinning factors yielding in OCBs that would lead to better organizational performance entirely. Besides, employees' felt obligation is something reliable to be studied as this factor is relevant and appropriate in capturing the impetuses that urged

academic staff to perform beyond the non-tasks. Additionally, the value of the mutual relationship between institutional administrators and subordinates can also be seen by identifying academics' felt obligation.

The findings of this research are significant to future researchers in expanding the knowledge of OCBs and leadership in educational administration. The results are even beneficial to be of concern by academics, universities, the Ministry of Education, students, and other stakeholders for the improvement and betterment of national education quality in the future. Finally, this research is significant as it contributes to the new knowledge of OCBs and concurrently supports to bridge the knowledge gap in leadership and organizational behavior. Issues and findings explored in this study can also be a benchmark for leaders in recognizing the important factors that contributed to OCBs by their subordinates.

The higher the level of employee's perceived exemplary leadership practices (Al-Sharafi & Rajiani, 2013) and perceived organizational support (Kurtessis et al., 2017) would lead to the higher level of OCBs, and this may subsequently increase organizational performances (Mitchell, Cropanzano, & Quisenberry, 2012). In general, pleasant academics who contribute by OCBs will be highly performed, committed, and devoted to the universities, and these, in turn, will result in quality and productive academics.

1.8   Scope and Limitation of the Study

Generally, this study examined the relationships between four variables which were perceived organizational support, exemplary leadership practices, felt obligation, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Provided that all variables integrated into this study have already been supported by the Social Exchange Theory by Blau (1964) in his study entitled "Exchange and Power in Social Life".

OCBs comprise five dimensions, namely altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy, and sportsmanship (Ueda, 2016; Organ et al., 2006; Podsakoff et al., 1990). The dimensions of exemplary leadership practices also comprised of five dimensions as identified by Kouzes and Posner (2007), namely modeling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart. Meanwhile, felt obligation was used to evaluate how well did the employees consider the organization and the way they assisted in meeting the organization's goals. Felt obligation was measured as a unidimensional construct that consists of seven items (Eisenberger et al., 2001). Perceived organizational support was also measured unidimensionally (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).

This research, however, is subject to several limitations. In the literature, broad definitions related to the concept of perceived organizational support are provided. Looking at the overall terms and definitions, this research focused on the most

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prominent characteristics of supportive organizations which were fairness, supervisor support, organizational rewards, and job condition, as mentioned by Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002).

Primarily, the original instrument of perceived organizational support consisted of 36 items. However, Eisenberger, Curnmings, Armeli, and Lynch (1997) affirmed that perceived organizational support can also be measured by using 16-item or 8-item survey of the original 36 items according to the highest factor loading. Therefore, this study utilized a short of 8 items (Eisenberger et al., 2016; Eisenberger et al., 1997) as it was still reasonable and encompassed all characteristics of excellent organizational support (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002). Respondents were required to indicate their level of agreement with the items stated in the survey form and choose the best answers that suited them out of the 7-point scale.

The term 'leaders' in this study refers to 'Head of Department' of the selected departments and faculties in RUs, Malaysia as recognized by the institution's laws and statutes. The exemplary leadership practices focused on five good practices (Kouzes & Posner, 2013; Al-Sharafi & Rajiani, 2013) exhibited by the departmental leaders as perceived by academic staff. A model of exemplary leadership practices was expectantly appropriate to measure leaders' practices in leading their organizations, as well as approaches they had to locate which fit best in the context of higher education institutions. Therefore, this study focused on exemplary leadership practices in RUs, Malaysia without being entailed by any other styles of leadership, such as transactional, participative, and autocratic. A total of 110 Heads of Department (HODs) from selected departments and faculties of five RUs were assessed by their subordinates (academic staff) to identify their level of exemplary leadership practices.

As this study was conducted in a survey method, thus, the findings of the study were based on the perception of academic staff on their level of agreement. A further study is suggested to be conducted in using a detailed interview technique that may develop in-depth views and perspectives. Instead of exploring academic staff's perception, the instruments of this study can also be adapted to gain views from the perspective of leaders to assess their subordinates. The respondents of this study involved academic staff from selected faculties that are inclusive and share the same characteristics from five Research Universities (RUs) in Malaysia (the University of Malaya, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia).

1.9   Definition of Terms

This subsection discusses the conceptual and operational definitions of terms used in the study. These terms were described by looking at the conceptual and operational definitions. Creswell (2014) had outlined a conceptual definition as the basic principles underlying a term and linked them to the theoretical framework. A conceptual

definition is a process of taking an abstract construct and refining it by giving theoretical descriptions.

On the other hand, operational definition, as suggested by Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012), refers to the process of linking a conceptual definition to a specific set of measurement techniques or procedures. This process is critical because it will connect between the abstract theoretical and the real observations of the domain in the study. In this study, the terms of organizational citizenship behavior, perceived organizational support, exemplary leadership practices, felt obligation, academic staff, Head of Department, and Research University were conceptually and operationally explained.

1.9.1 Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) are extra-role or non-task behaviors that are not formally rewarded by the organizations. Organ, Podsakoff, and MacKenzie (2006) conceptualized OCBs as an individual's actions that help to enhance the social and psychological environment where employees consider it as something more than assessable in performance appraisals. Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, and Fetter (1990) stated that OCBs encompass five positive dimensions, namely altruism, civic virtue, conscientiousness, courtesy, and sportsmanship. *Altruism* is about helping behavior of an employee toward colleagues; *courtesy* is about adhering to the company policies; while *conscientiousness* refers to employee's dedication to the job which exceeds formal requirements; while *civic virtue* is the behavior of an employee being kind to co-workers; and finally, *sportsmanship* refers to employee's behavior tolerating the unavoidable irritations (Rose et al., 2016; Ueda, 2016; Dirican & Erdil, 2016; Organ et al., 2006).

In this study, the term OCBs operationally refers to the willingness of academic staff to perform their tasks beyond in-role formal job specifications which requires some extra efforts. OCBs were measured using 24 items of five dimensions as suggested by Podsakoff and his colleagues. The dimension of *altruism* focusses on discretionary behaviors of helping colleagues who have work-related problems, heavy workloads, absent, and orient new people. Meanwhile, *courtesy* highlights academic staff discretionary behavior of intention at avoiding the occurrence of work-related issues with colleagues, such as being mindful and taking preventive steps, respecting people's rights, avoiding from creating problems, and considering the impact of their actions on colleagues. The dimension of *civic virtue* measures academic staff's voluntarily behavior to take responsibility in participating of meetings and functions, keeping abreast of changes, and reading announcements issued by the organization. On the other hand, *sportsmanship* was reviewed by evaluating academic staff's willingness to tolerate and not complain about trivial matters, magnify problems, find fault, and so forth that are less than ideal circumstances. Finally, *conscientiousness* measures academic staff's behavior to do one's job thoroughly that goes well and exceeds the minimum requirements, such as attendance, taking breaks, and obeying rules and regulations.

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1.9.2 Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support refers to the extent of how the organizations are willing to support employees concerning the appreciation of their contributions and their well-being. Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, and Sowa (1986) elaborated the term perceived organizational support in the Organizational Support Theory as the extent to which employees believe their organization meets the socio-emotional needs and recognize their efforts. Additionally, Eisenberger, Stinglhamber, Vandenberghe, Sucharski, and Rhoades (2002) described the term perceived organizational support as to how employees judge and are sensitive about the organizations' recognitions, appreciations, and considerations towards their efforts and contributions, as well as taking care of employees' well-being. Furthermore, Eisenberger (2002) identified three elements of perceived organizational support, namely supervisor support, fairness, as well as organizational reward and job condition.

The term perceived organizational support can be operationally referred to the level in which academic staff in Malaysian Research Universities feel that their efforts and contributions are well recognized by the organizations, and, in turn, the organizations are also concerned about their well-being. Perceived organizational support was measured unidimensionally based on three elements as suggested by Eisenberger (2002) that are fairness, rewards provided, and the job conditions, and supervisor support. The construct was measured using eight items (Eisenberger et al., 1986) that focus on the contributions, appreciations, ignorance, concerns, care, and job recognition by the organizations, as well as employees' general satisfaction and accomplishments at the workplace.

1.9.3 Exemplary Leadership Practices

Leadership practices are important in each organization as it can create a climate in which people turn challenging opportunities into remarkable successes. Kouzes and Posner (2007) suggested exemplary leadership practices as behaviors of leaders to commit with shared values, identity, and goals that aim to increase the intrinsic valence of group efforts on behalf of the collective goal. Furthermore, they explained that exemplary leadership practices as leaders' behavior to transform values into actions, visions into realities, obstacles into innovations, separateness into solidarity, and risks into rewards. Next, Kouzes and Posner, in 2013, had introduced 'The Five Practices of Exemplary Leadership' which correspond with six behaviors each from the 30-item Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI), namely model the way, encourage the heart, challenge the process, inspire a shared vision, and enable others to act.

Exemplary leadership practices in this study refer to a leader's capacity, capability, and competency at achieving superior performance through leading by example to their staff. The term 'leader' refers to the Head of Department and 'staff' as academicians of selected faculties in Malaysian Research Universities. A Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) was employed in this study to evaluate the

level of exemplary leadership practices demonstrated by the Heads of Department. Of these five domains, 30 competencies were identified in leadership practices inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013) where each practice consists of reasonably specific, concrete, and measurable behaviors that leaders use to achieve extraordinary results, take employees and organizations out of their comfort zone, and bring them to experience new things that they have never been through before.

1.9.4 Felt Obligation

Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, and Rhoades (2001) defined the term of felt obligation as to how the individuals perceive they should care and mind about the goals and well-being of their organizations. Furthermore, the researchers suggested that felt obligation occurs when employees discover that the organizations recognize their efforts, concern about their well-being, and reward their performances. Intrinsically, Dabos and Rousseau (2004) stated that favorable treatment by an individual creates a moral felt obligation in another individual to fulfill the requirements of social exchange by reciprocating the treatment.

Felt obligation can be operationally defined as academic staff's belief of whether or not they should care about the goals and well-being of the organizations by reciprocating positive attitudes and goodwill after receiving such favorable treatments. Supposing that academics who believe and feel that the organizations have fulfilled their socio-emotional needs, will they, in turn, feel obliged to return the kindness through better performance that benefits the institutions. The construct of felt obligation was measured using seven items with a 7-point scale ranged from 1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree, as suggested by Eisenberger, Armeli, Rexwinkel, Lynch, and Rhoades (2001). Sample items include "I owe it to my work organization to give 100% of my energy to its goals while I am at work," "I would feel guilty if I did not meet the organization's performance standards", and "I feel that the only obligation I have toward my work organization is to fulfill the minimum requirements of my job".

1.9.5 Academic Staff

Academic staff are the professional and administrative persons holding appointments at the higher education institutions. They are the impetus for organizational success which closely support the mission and vision of the universities. According to the Malaysian Qualifications Agency (2014), academic staff are the professional and administrative employees of the institution, with duties and categories of appointments that are associated with higher education administration. In this study, academic staff referred to a group of individuals of different gender, age, tenure of service, and rank position who are working at five Research Universities in Malaysia. Academic staff also referred to the persons who are specialized in various fields of study and continuously engaged in research, publications, consultations, and concurrently must perform their ordinary tasks, such as teaching, mentoring, as well as sharing thoughts with the communities.

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1.9.6 Head of Department

Head of Department is a leader who is directly in contact with the faculty, staff, and students daily. In practice, the Head of Department is ultimately responsible for the decisions made at the departmental level. Barge (2014) and Middlehurst (2012) listed some responsibilities assigned to the Head of Department, such as ensuring appropriate mechanisms are in place to support the quality of teaching and learning, ensuring the best facilities and resources are well-provided to support research activity, reviewing and prioritizing staffing needs, and ensuring proper application and allocation of departmental funds. This study operationally referred to the Head of Department as the person who represents the department, university, and wider academic community. This dual responsibility of being both institutional and academic leaders (Manaseh, 2016; Altbach, 2011) requires Head of Department to excel exemplary practices in running errands as they are responsible for providing virtuous organizational culture.

1.9.7 Research University (RU)

Altbach (2013) defined Research University (RU) as an academic institution which is devoted to knowledge creation and dissemination in a series of disciplines with appropriate infrastructures to foster teaching and learning to the uppermost level. In Malaysia, an RU is a title conferred by the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in 2006 after going through eligibility evaluations by the Evaluator of Research University Committee. RUs are the public universities of product and service commercialization. This study referred to an RU as an institution that focuses more on research activities based on research and development (R&D), and concurrently brings awareness of the research culture into the teaching and learning process. RU is also an institution with the role to develop ethical societies and create innovation, as well as commercialization in developing and manufacturing products. To date, five public universities have been conferred by the MOHE as RUs, namely the University of Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

1.10 Summary

This chapter provides an overview of organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs), perceived organizational support, exemplary leadership practices, and felt obligation. The background of the study, problem statement, objectives of the study, research questions, hypotheses, significance of the study, scope and limitation, and the definition of terms have been discussed in this chapter. As guided by the Social Exchange Theory, this study aimed to determine how fit the structural model (variables in the framework) with the measurement model (an observed data). The clarification of theories and models of this study is discussed in the latter part.

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