Impact of Task and Relationship Orientated Leadership Style on Job Satisfaction in Malaysia's Small Medium Enterprises (SME)

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Abstract

The theory of leadership divides leaders and their practices into two, task orientated and relationship (relation) orientated. Accordingly, task orientated leader's main priority is to achieve goals, meanwhile relationship orientated leaders are keen on attaining a comfortable working environment while maintaining the relationships with their colleagues. On the other hand, job satisfaction discusses about the personal feeling of fulfilment of an employee and it is varied depending on induvial perception. This study was conducted on the perspectives of leaders and employees based on Small Medium Enterprise in Malaysia (SME). SME has major contribution to the country as it ensures a stable employment rate and a developing gross domestic product (GDP). The current research intends to discover the relationship between leadership styles and employees' job satisfaction in SME.

Key words: leadership style; task-orientated; relationship-orientated; job satisfaction; small medium enterprise(SME)

Introduction

According to a research conducted in SME's Malaysia by Kamarulzaman and Ibrahim (2012), organizations that have competence to change their management approach using leadership skills will further improve their performance. They are keener on getting the job done but at the same time give importance on how they are treated at the workplace. Therefore, it was concluded that firms who want to adopt job satisfaction must supply their initiatives and increase the capabilities (Larkin, 2016).

Small Business Entrepreneurships are standard sized organization, whom are keen on handling appropriate number of workers while producing quality outcomes. However, there are still major issues faced by them such as work load and salaries. Due to the pressure to increase the country gross domestic product (GDP), employees are often affected from different perspectives. Therefore, job satisfaction at the workplace is affected. SME's in Malaysia constituted 98.5% of the total business establishments while leading to higher contribution to GDP from 32.2% in 2010 to 36.6% in 2016 through various sectors (Kamarulzaman & Ibrahim, 2012; SME Corporation Malaysia, 2017).

Job satisfaction has always been a major issue faced by employee's in Malaysian SME's. Past studies have constantly shown that individuals whom were highly dedicated to their organization have higher job satisfaction but there are few factors affecting them. It is believed that both the managers and subordinates have the capability and tendency to influence one another (Lo & Ramayah, 2011).

Another study debated about leadership styles and job satisfaction in SME based on Malaysia. Employees from lower to middle management level from small business in Malaysia were chosen as the respondents and it was discovered that leadership styles among employer and employee in Malaysia has certainly broaden the understanding and arguments on the relationship between leadership style and employees' job satisfaction. Therefore, it was verified that the way to retain employees and progress their efficiency is to capture employees' job satisfaction (Lo & Ramayah, 2011).

Literature Review

Leadership Style: The sole purpose of leadership behaviour is to lead a group of people or an organization towards the right direction to accomplish a goal that they are rooting to achieve. It is compulsory to implement leadership for much efficient guidance and compulsory achievements (Voon, Lo, Ngui, & Ayob, 2011). However, according to Madlock (2008), leadership can vary from

guiding the employees towards shared goals or either as simply as following something the leaders does. To avoid the gap between employee and employer, leadership style is practiced for better outcomes in workplace while maintaining an organized work pattern. An organization of any type progresses under their own specified leadership styles depending on their environment. It varies according to own individual perceptions. Leadership styles are used to guide employees throughout their assessment's and facilitate activities.

On the other hand, according to Winston and Patterson (2006), a leader is someone who can distinguish the diversity of the followers and still guide them towards the union of agreement, without destructing the follower's natural essence. Moreover, a leader should also be able to accommodate the variation in the employees and guide them by providing training and scopes towards the direction of achievement. They should be able to identify the different skills obtained by each of the employees and encourage them to the right pathway in their working field. A justifiable peace should be achieved through the community and ensure that everyone has a clear impression of one another in the outside world. Correspondingly, leaders are competent with critical thinking skills, awareness, instinct and persuasive bombast where they both accept and produce opinions in a way where they come to share the same insight.

The interaction between superior and staff is crucial at workplace, so different type of dimension such as task orientated leadership style and relationship orientated styles are practiced. However, managerial Grid indicates a certain type of leader who have concern for both people and production but doesn't emphasize on just task and relation behaviour (Madlock, 2008).

Task orientated leaders emphasize on profit and solemnly on the production site of the company because they are keen on developing the organization rather than other things. The satisfaction of stakeholders and shareholders are guaranteed by maintaining the profit margin in a way that it is advantageous to them. Furthermore, they are centred on final products and the general mission of the association. Perhaps the most concise definition of task-oriented leadership is 'doing whatever it takes to get the job done' (Pamela, 2015; Yukl, 2013).

On the other hand, organizations that practise **relationship orientated** leadership styles are leaders who care more about their employee's well-being. They adopt relationships throughout their lives by constructing and maintaining personal networks (Eric, 2016). Workers well-being is taken care off while maintaining a comfortable working condition so that they don't encourage any unnecessary distress when conducting their job. Mutual trust within the organization is taken into serious consideration because it ensures an effective cooperation. Moreover, importance is given to the relationship between employer and employees by socializing within the people as it guaranteed to build a stable relationship. Relationship orientated leadership believes that the finest way to accomplish a quality task is by empowering the employee (Madlock, 2008; Yukl, 2013).

Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction is fundamentally the fulfilment an individual feel whenever they are conducting their duty. Personal fulfilment basically means the accomplishment of life goals which are essential for the individual. Determining where leadership fits into our lives, we need to contemplate the many conceptions of what people have towards personal fulfilment (Mills, 2007). The sentiment expressed embodies the view that, it is important to choose the specific type of leadership that suits the personality best. The main factor that contributed to work stress and agitation are the emission from the nature of job, where the interaction within supervisor and staff takes place. It may vary depending on the environment they are working on, co-workers, employer or the job itself. The main cause for voluntary resignation is most frequently due to distress between the superior staff and the lower level employee. If the message is not sent evidently, there is high possibility for negative influence on job to happen. Leadership style itself contributes highly to job satisfaction of a person (Madlock, 2008).

Previous Studies on Relationship between Leadership Style and Job Satisfaction

Minavand, Mokhtari, Zakerian and Pahlevan (2013), demonstrated a notable study with 100 employees from different projects to participate in a survey about both task and relationship orientated leadership and which one provides higher job satisfaction. When an open area for communication is created, employees can communicate freely without any obstacles and there wouldn't be any

interaction issues. It is believed that an employee with a relaxed work environment find job satisfaction easily than one with a rough one. On the other hand, the quality of the performance is also even better as the problems are communicated and solutions are taken together. Moreover, when an employee engages themselves in a job with high level of stress, low level of organizational commitment, and job dissatisfaction is expressed by employees as a reason for leaving their job. It was therefore concluded that employees whom engage with a relationship-oriented project manager have higher levels of job satisfaction.

A study conducted by Aziz, Abdullah, and Tajudin (2013), with 375 participants indicated that leadership styles does influence the business performance of small and medium enterprises in Malaysia. Moreover, Malaysia is multicultural environment, so it is crucial to maintain relationships among one another and leadership styles helps them to form the suitable environment. Different types of leadership styles have different effect on the job satisfaction. Malaysia based employees are mainly influenced by the intrinsic value than the extrinsic factors. Leadership style is actively practised and preferred by majority SME's because it encourages the employees to efficiently complete the job. It can be determined that leadership styles of SME owners can influence the working environment of the SME's. Since small business sector in Malaysia are still under the developing phase, most of the employers will choose a progressive leadership style because that will ensure a rapid progress of their business in market. However, employees might have a different perception towards that opinion both intrinsic and extrinsic factors matter to which provided them with satisfaction. It was therefore concluded that leadership styles affect job satisfaction depending on the employee's preferences.

A study by Madlock (2008), demonstrated that there is an influence of supervisor communicator competence and leadership style on employee job and communicator satisfaction. The results showed a strong relationship between supervisors' communicator competence and their task and relational leadership styles, with supervisor communicator competence being a stronger predictor of employee job and communication satisfaction. It was indicated that both task and relational leadership style to be positively related to subordinate job and communication satisfaction.

Another notable survey was conducted by Mikkelson, York, and Arritola (2015), where the purpose of this research was to establish that there is significant relationship between leadership styles (task and relationship orientated) practised in organization and job satisfaction of employee. The study affirmed that the two different types of leadership have different effect on the job satisfaction at workplace. It was indicated that an effective communication was significantly associated to job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment. Task-oriented leadership style does have a connection to job satisfaction, however various researchers provide inconsistent results as the survey was conducted based on a different perspective and environment. On the other hand, relationship-orientated leadership style is the best predictor of job satisfaction as subordinates and peers value a workplace relationship among each other. A feeling of respect is formed while building a trust based relationship.

Research Methodology

Research Design: Generally, this research study uses quantitative research methodological approach, it was utilized for the current study to maximize the generalizability of the findings based on the size and diversity of the sample. The data for quantitative research is usually collected by questionnaires, surveys and tests where it is normally in the form of numbers and statistics (Harwell, 2004). This study uses a questionnaire approach to gather data. Descriptive statistics is adopted where information is taken from the actual state of the environment without making any changes. The situation is observed from a point of view and no manipulations are made, therefore the analysis is made upon the correlation of various phenomena as this study (Williams, 2011).

Research Sample: The research sampling technique that will be used for this study to analyze the impact of leadership on job satisfaction in Small Medium Business(SME) would be non-probability. Besides, non-probability technique allows to choose the convenience sampling that compiles to the requirements. Being that, working adults are important to participate in this survey. In a view that not everyone will be eligible to answer the survey questions without a work experience. The sample size

in this research would be 100 employees from SME's in Johor Bahru (JB) area, whom are middle and lower level employee's (non-supervisory employees). In correlational research at least 30 subjects are required to establish a relationship, therefore 100 respondents are more than sufficient to conduct a reliable study upon this topic (Hill, 1998)

Research Instrument: The total number of 37 questions were divided into different aspects to gather precise data such as the first one demographic profile was measured by the 5-item. Secondly, job satisfaction was measured by the 12-item while the last one was leadership style measured by the 20-item, where it was further divided into task and relationship orientated styles. A 5-point Likert-type response measure (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) was used in the current study instead of the original scale formatting to ensure overall consistency throughout the questionnaire (refer Appendix).

Table 1: Classification of research questions

Questions	Variables	Adaption
Q1 – Q5	Demographic Questions	Madlock, (2008)
Q6 – Q17	Job Satisfaction Scale	Parvin and Kabir (2011)
		Baylor, (2010)
Q18 – Q37	Leadership Style Scale	Madlock, (2008)

Findings

Data for the current research study was attained from various Small Medium Enterprise (SME) in Johor Bahru. A total of 100 questionnaires were distributed among the respondents, however, only 60 questionnaires were returned fully answered. To factually measure the reliability of an instrument, Cronbach's alpha test was conducted, where a maximum value of 0.90 is suggested.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Test

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Job Satisfaction	12	0.967
Task-Orientated	10	0.941
Relationship-Orientated	10	0.964

Tables 3 shows the demographic profile of respondents consisting of gender, age, working experience in terms of years, type of organization and the immediate supervisor gender.

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variables	Categories	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	male	34	56.7
	female	26	43.3
Age	less than 20	2	3.3
	21-30	28	46.7
	31-40	28	46.7
	more than 40	2	3.3
Tenure	less than a year	16	26.7
	2-5 years	32	53.3
	more than 5 years	12	20.0
Supervisor gender	male	40	66.7
	female	20	33.3
Organization type	High-Tech	4	6.7
	Manufacturing	38	63.3
	Service	14	23.3
	Education	2	3.3
	Government	2	3.3

A research study with larger samples require normality test to ensure that the data is equally distributed. A result of skewness and kurtosis values are within -2 and +2 is considered symmetrical (Ghasemi & Zahediasl, 2012).

Table 4: Normality Test output

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis
Job Satisfaction	-0.514	-1.145
Task Orientated	-0.226	-1.132
Relationship Orientated	-0.252	-1.093

Relationship between Task Orientated Leadership Style and Job Satisfaction

The Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted to determine whether there is a correlation between task orientated leadership style and job satisfaction. The result showed a significant and negative relationship between both variables. Table 5 shows the r value of task orientated leadership style ($r = 0.648$, $p < 0.05$). The value of R square is 42.0%, thus, displaying that the task orientated leadership style is a good predictor in job satisfaction. The value of beta in this study signifies the influence of task orientated leadership style towards job satisfaction among employees ($\beta = -0.648$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 5: Relationship between Task Orientated Leadership Style and Job Satisfaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	-0.648**	0.420	0.410	0.777

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	6.172	0.441		13.984	0.000
Task Orientated	-0.827	0.128	-0.648	-6.475	0.000

Dependant Variable: Job Satisfaction

Relationship between Relationship Orientated Leadership Style and Job Satisfaction

The result showed a significant and positive relationship between both variables. Table 6 indicates the r value of relationship orientated leadership style (r = 0.825, p < 0.05). The value of R square was 68.1% consequently proving that the relationship orientated leadership style is a good predictor in job satisfaction. The beta value for relationship orientated leadership style records as (β = 0.825, p < 0.05). The result obtained through the analysis supports hypothesis 2, therefore, is it accepted.

Table 6: Relationship between Relationship Orientated Leadership Style and Job Satisfaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.825**	0.681	0.675	0.577

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	0.209	0.295		0.707	0.482
Relationship Orientated	0.897	0.081	0.825	11.122	0.000

Dependant Variable: Job Satisfaction

Leadership Style that contributes most to Job Satisfaction

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine which leadership styles have a greater impact on job satisfaction. Based on the table 7, task orientated leadership style (β = -0.160) is negatively correlated to job satisfaction, however, relationship orientated leadership style (β = 0.716) is positively correlated to job satisfaction. The R square represents the total percentage that leadership styles contribute on job satisfaction was 69%. Thus, it is a good prediction in predicting job satisfaction. The result below supports hypothesis 1, therefore, it is accepted.

Table 7: Leadership Styles that contribute most to Job Satisfaction

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.833	0.695	0.684	0.569

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Model	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	1.319	0.750		1.758	0.084
Task Orientated	-0.205	0.128	-0.160	-1.606	0.114
Relationship Orientated	0.778	0.109	0.716	7.166	0.000

Dependant Variable: Job Satisfaction

Discussion

Relationship between Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction

Most of the previous studies proved that leadership styles are very important in an organization because it affects the employee job satisfaction. The first objective of this study is to determine the relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction within SMEs in Malaysia. There are two main leadership styles that were comprised in this study, namely, task orientated and relationship orientated leadership style.

Correspondingly, this study found that leadership styles have a very strong relationship with job satisfaction. Task orientated leadership style has a significant and negative relationship with job satisfaction, meanwhile, the relationship orientated leadership style has a significant and positive relationship with job satisfaction. This explains that there is certainly relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction.

Leadership Styles that contributes most on Job Satisfaction

The other objective of this study is to determine which of the leadership style that contributes the most to job satisfaction. This study conducted concluded that task orientated leadership style is negatively correlated to job satisfaction. However, relationship orientated leadership style is positively correlated. Thus, resulting in relationship orientated leadership style contributing more to the job satisfaction.

Likewise, a study by Suher, Bir, Engin, and Akgoz (2016), indicates that the findings signify that there is positive and strong relationship between relationship orientated leadership style and job satisfaction, supporting the current study. The results also indicated a weak relationship between task-oriented leadership style and job and communication satisfaction. According to the results, there is a strong significant standardized regression coefficient for relationship orientated leadership style and negative relationship for task orientated leadership style. This could be due to employee's personal preferences as they want to establish a relationship to the core with the leaders.

The first hypothesis stated the level of job satisfaction among the employees of relationship-oriented significantly differs from the employees of task-oriented. The analysis revealed that there was indeed a difference between the job satisfaction of the two leadership styles. Relationship orientated leadership style is positively related, however, task orientated is negatively correlated to job satisfaction. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. This result conforms to the findings of a previous study conducted by Minavand, Mokhtari, Zakerian and Pahlevan (2013), where a similar result was drawn from the following hypothesis because employees prefer to work under a relationship orientated employer as they are not pressured.

On the other hand, the second hypothesis stated that relations-oriented behaviour will be positively correlated with job satisfaction. According to the results obtained, relationship orientated leadership style is correlated positively, therefore, the hypothesis is accepted. A similar study conducted by Fernandez (2008), supports the hypothesis as it reasoned that relationship orientated leadership style can increase work performance efficiently, as it improves communication and collaboration among employees, creating commitment to their organization.

Managerial Implication

This study provides a clear view on the relationship between leadership styles and job satisfaction. Moreover, this study is an effort to distinguish the linkage between the specific leadership style (task orientated and relationship orientated) and job satisfaction to further extend the literature knowledge that has been conducted so far. Besides, various recommendations for entrepreneurs and management team within SME's is suggested to reduce their concern about their leadership styles and job satisfaction within their company. The results of this study appear to meet the targeted objectives, therefore, taking generalization into consideration, a brief discussion on these results and its realistic implications are analysed as follow:

According to the findings, it was discovered that a negative relationship exists between task orientated leadership style and job satisfaction. However, positive relationship was founded between relationship orientated leadership style and job satisfaction. It is crucial for a company to take initiative towards the situation before it deteriorate. Employees prefer an emotional bonding at their workplace where they can interact freely rather than just for work purpose.

Additionally, some employees have reasoned that task-oriented leaders as someone whom are often authoritarian and directive and that such perceptions result in declining employee morale and satisfaction. The company should spend time on recognizing the personal leadership style preference

for their long-term employees. This indicates that the employer has concern for their subordinates (Fernandez, 2008).

Lastly, a continuous research in this theoretical model is needed to have wider speculation and deeper understanding regarding this topic. The depth of this study can be useful to many parties such as employers, employees and even stakeholders and the proposed initiatives might improve the satisfaction of workers and revenue in the organization. The employers will be able to understand on the importance of building a suitable leadership style in the workplace and not just solemnly focus on profits.

Limitations of Study

Although the research has served its objectives, there are still some unavoidable limitations. The respondents for this research were taken into serious consideration as they are working adults in SME's from Johor Bahru whom range from middle to lower position. Therefore, it was a big challenge to gather the data needed as there were low response rate in data collection, showing disparity in the questionnaire distributed and received. The 100 questionnaires were passed to various SME's, however, the amount of response perceived was 60% out of the 100%. This is due to busy and hectic schedule of the employees, resulting in them having no time to complete the questions.

Furthermore, the study is bounded by geographical restrictions as they were only focused on respondents from Johor Bahru. The results may not represent the entire employee's impression towards leadership style and job satisfaction, as it is impossible to distinguish whether the results can be applied to SME employees from other states. Since the survey is conducted only in Johor Bahru, this could be a limiting factor to represent the theory as a general conclusion.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the results of the study indicated that there is relationship between leadership style and job satisfaction. Task orientated leadership style does disrupt the job satisfaction of workers. A method of mean score was applied to study the objectives along with Pearson's correlation coefficient. The findings indicated that there is negative relationship between task orientated leadership style and positive relationships between relationship oriented leader style and job satisfaction. The work environment could be adjusted into a better place from the effort of the employers and consideration should be put into employee's personal preferences.

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Appendix

A. Demographic Questions

Please tick (✓) for the following statement. Choose only one answer.

1.	Gender	☐ Male ☐ Female
2.	Age	☐ < 20 (less than) ☐ 21 – 30 ☐ 31 – 40 ☐ > 41 (more than
3.	Tenure (working experience)	☐ Less than a year ☐ 2 – 5 Years ☐ More than 5 years
4.	Your immediate supervisor gender	☐ Male ☐ Female
5.	Which best describes your organization?	☐ High Tech ☐ Manufacturing ☐ Service ☐ Education ☐ Civil Service ☐ Government ☐ *Other _____*

B. Employees' Perceptions towards Job Satisfaction

In this section participants are required to rate the questions related to job satisfaction at their workplace. Respondents are required to circle the level to which they agree or disagree with each statement which using 5-point Likert scale [(1) = strongly disagree; (2) = disagree; (3) = neutral; (4) = agree and (5) = strongly agree]

You have been selected to participate in a research project. Your participation in this survey process is voluntary and strictly confidential. Please complete this questionnaire as openly and honestly as possible. Any questions you may have about the process will be promptly answered by the researcher.

Think of your job in general. All in all, what is it like most of the time? Please indicate your response by writing the number that best describes how you feel about the statement.

6.	I am happy with my work responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I feel comfortable in carrying out my responsibilities.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	I am satisfied with work relationships with the people around me.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	I am happy with your overall job security.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	I am happy with the recognition and rewards for my outstanding works and contribution	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Fulfilling my responsibilities give me a feeling of satisfaction & personal achievement.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization	1	2	3	4	5
13.	I am satisfied with the given right to put forward my opinions.	1	2	3	4	5

14.	I feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I feel emotionally attached to this organization	1	2	3	4	5
16.	I am satisfied with the leaders in my workplace as positive role models.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	I feel like a "part of the family" at my organization	1	2	3	4	5

C. Leadership Style

Think about how often your immediate supervisor engages in the described behaviour. For each item, select the number that best represents the behaviour that your immediate supervisor is most likely to exhibit.

My immediate supervisor . . .

Task-Orientated

18.	Tells group members what they are supposed to do	1	2	3	4	5
19.	Sets standards of performance for group members.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Responds favourably to suggestions made by others.	1	2	3	4	5
21.	Makes his or her perspective clear to others.	1	2	3	4	5
22.	Develops a plan of action for the group.	1	2	3	4	5
23.	Behaves in a predictable manner toward group members.	1	2	3	4	5
24.	Defines role responsibilities for each group member	1	2	3	4	5
25.	Clarifies his or her own role within the group.	1	2	3	4	5
26.	Provides a plan for how the work is to be done.	1	2	3	4	5
27.	Provides criteria for what is expected of the group.	1	2	3	4	5

Relationship-Orientated

28.	Acts friendly with members of the group.	1	2	3	4	5
29.	Helps others feel comfortable in the group.	1	2	3	4	5
30.	Makes suggestions on how to solve problems.	1	2	3	4	5
31.	Treats others fairly.	1	2	3	4	5
32.	Communicates actively with group members.	1	2	3	4	5
33.	Shows concern for the personal well-being of others.	1	2	3	4	5
34.	Shows flexibility in making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
35.	Discloses thoughts and feelings to group members.	1	2	3	4	5
36.	Encourages group members to do quality work.	1	2	3	4	5
37.	Helps group members get along.	1	2	3	4	5