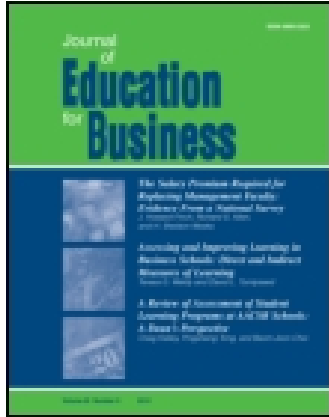


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Impact of Psychological Ownership on the Performance of Business School Lecturers

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The purpose of the present article is to investigate the impact of psychological ownership, job performance, job commitment, and job satisfaction among business school lecturers of public universities in Malaysia. As psychological ownership is a relatively new concept, the present study expands the use of it in a different setting. Based on the correlation analysis, it was found that psychological ownership had significant and positive relations with job commitment, job satisfaction, and performance. The findings of the present study can help the management of universities select the lecturers with a right attitude and provide them with a right environment to perform better.

Keywords: Business school lecturers, Job commitment, Job performance, Job satisfaction, Psychological ownership, Malaysia

Psychological ownership is defined as the state in which individuals feel as though the target of ownership (material or immaterial in nature) or a piece of it is theirs (i.e., “It is mine!”; Pierce, Kostova, & Dirks, 2003). The core essence of psychological ownership is “the feeling of possessiveness and of being psychologically tied to an object” (Pierce et al., p. 87). Theory has proposed that employees who feel and act like owners of the organization will assume personal risk, responsibility, and accountability toward their actions and decisions affecting their organizations. This sense of ownership is believed to bring an impact to the success of an organization. Brown (1989) asserted that psychological ownership of employees provides the competitive difference to the organizations through enhanced performance. In line with this conception, Sharp (2005) stated that ownership provides the transition from “It’s just a job” to “It’s who I am and what I do” (p.12). Owners cater to the purpose of the organization in terms of its mission, vision, values, and strategy (Freiberg, 2001). Psychological ownership has been generally associated with student learning and user acceptance of medical information systems (Pare, Sicotte, & Jacques, 2006; Wood, 2003). Researchers and practitioners in the field of management (Freiberg; O’Reilly, 2002; Sharp) have become interested in analyzing the impact of psychological owner-

ship in an organizational setting. To our knowledge, there are no studies that link psychological ownership to academician’s performance, satisfaction, and commitment. We have attempted to study these relations in the present study.

A fundamental question addressed in the present article is: How does psychological ownership influence the performance, satisfaction, and commitment of faculty members of public business schools in Malaysia?

We conducted our research at the most opportune moment. According to a recent committee report by the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia, Malaysian institutions of higher education are lagging behind in competitiveness when compared with reputable universities in the Asia Pacific region (Committee Report, 2006). This situation is in spite of providing excellent infrastructure facilities to the faculty members. The international criteria used to measure competitiveness of a university are: the reputation of the institution, the strength of its faculty, the quality of research produced, the alumni, the number of renowned researchers, research articles that have been published in international refereed journals, and citation index record. By looking at the aforementioned criteria, it is evident that the majority of the competitive measures such as quality of research produced, the number of articles published, and the strength of faculty depend solely on academicians. The researchers and university managers are grappling to identify factors that can help improve the performance of faculty members. Through this research, we submit that psychological ownership of faculty members can play a prominent role in

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improving their performance, satisfaction, and commitment levels.

The contributions of the present study are twofold. First, we argue the relations between psychological ownership, job satisfaction, job commitment, and job performance among academicians. To empirically test these relations, we have chosen the faculty members from business schools of public universities. Second, the present study has been carried out in Malaysia, a fast-developing country of Southeast Asia. We believe that the present study can be replicated with faculty members from any faculty from any part of the world.

The following section of this article discusses the basics of psychological ownership, followed by a description of the higher education scenario in Malaysia. Next, we describe the theoretical framework and hypothesis development, explain the methodology, and present data analysis and results. The results are discussed, and finally we present conclusions, limitations, and directions for future research.

PSYCHOLOGICAL OWNERSHIP

The theory of psychological ownership states that under certain conditions, organizational members can develop feelings of ownership toward the organization and various organizational factors (Pierce et al., 2001). There are three features identified by Pierce et al. (2001, 2003) which treat psychological ownership as distinctive and unique. They are (a) the sense of ownership that manifests itself in the meaning and emotion commonly associated with “my,” “mine,” and “our,” (b) reflection of a relation between an individual and an object (material or immaterial in nature) in which the object is experienced as having a close connection with the self, and (c) the state of psychological ownership, which comprises cognitive and affective cores as it reflects the individual’s awareness, thoughts, beliefs regarding the target of ownership, as well as emotional or affective sensation. Based on these features, psychological ownership can be classified as an attitude toward a target. The intriguing question now is: What are the factors or experiences that create psychological ownership among faculty members?

There are three factors that create psychological ownership among faculty members: (a) having control over the target or object, (b) intimate contact or knowledge about the target or object, and (c) investing the self to the target or object. In the present article, we will refer to *target* or *object* as teaching, research, and supervisory activities. Having control over the object is an important experience that allows an individual to have higher levels of psychological ownership. For example, faculty members with better control over their job will have a higher level of psychological ownership than faculty members who have less control. Association with the target and investment of self are also suggested to be important experiences of psychological ownership and can influence psychological ownership simultaneously or separately. The theory of psychological ownership suggests that

these three experiences create psychological ownership (i.e., control, intimate knowledge, investment of self) and these are distinct, complementary, and additive in nature (Pierce et al., 2001). The feeling of ownership can be generated by any or by a combination of these experiences. Based on the aforementioned arguments, it can be inferred that this feeling of ownership (psychological) among faculty members contributes to the success of a faculty.

MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES

The current era of knowledge-based economy is placing greater value on knowledge and the creation of a knowledgeable workforce serves as the wheel that generates economic value. To create such a workforce, the education system experienced by individuals becomes essential. Hence, the emergence of knowledge economy has indirectly placed education as a tool to create competent and progressive knowledge workers. According to Al-Turki and Duffuaa (2003), educational institutes play a great role in economic development by producing high quality graduates and research. In the Eight Malaysia Plan (2001–2005), the government has expressed its desire to develop and promote Malaysia as a regional center of educational excellence, emphasizing increased accessibility to local tertiary education. Much effort has been made to achieve this objective. A vast number of higher educational institutions are being established. To increase efficiency in handling policies regarding tertiary education, the Malaysian government established the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in 2004 with a vision to make institutions of higher education in Malaysia internationally recognized centers of excellence for knowledge acquisition. The Malaysian government has allocated 20.6% of the budget for higher education in the Ninth Malaysia Plan (2006–2010). Currently, there are 17 public universities and university colleges offering diploma, degree, masters, and doctoral programs in Malaysia.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Theory has linked the sense of ownership with feelings of responsibility to invest time and energy to advance the cause of the organization (Pierce et al., 2001). This has led to the belief that psychological ownership influences employee performance. The empirical studies have produced perplexing results (Mayhew et al., 2003; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Vandewalle et al., 1995). The researchers are yet to untangle this anomalous behavior. Most of the earlier studies have been conducted in a western setting. Based on these studies alone, we cannot conclude about the relation between psychological ownership and job performance. We conducted the present study on lecturers from business schools in public

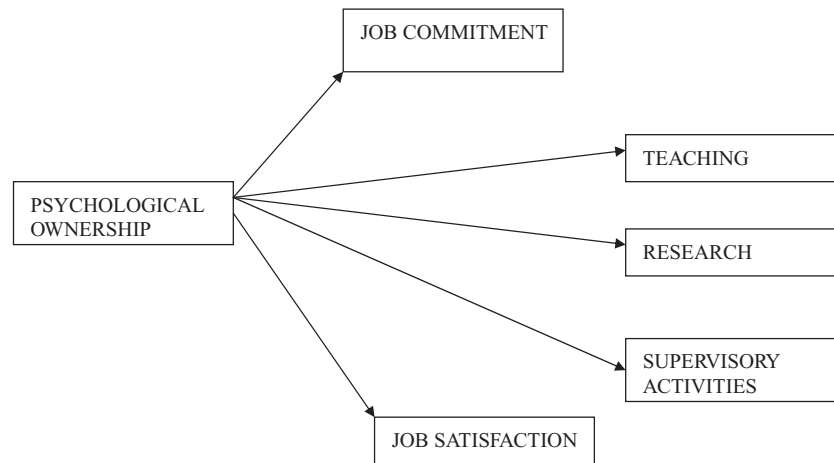


FIGURE 1 Theoretical framework.

universities in Malaysia and the present study is the first of its kind in an Eastern setting.

Performance can be looked at as the extent to which an organizational member contributes to achieving the objectives of the organization. Motowidlo, Borman and Schmit (1997) further enhanced this definition as the aggregated value to the organization of the discrete behavioral episodes that an individual performs across a standard interval of time. In this research, we have treated performance as a multidimensional concept and have explained in detail later in the article.

Many researchers have studied the link between psychological ownership and affective commitment and have shown a positive relation (Vandewalle et al., 1995; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). The studies on the relation between job commitment and job performance have yielded mixed results. For example, studies by Hackett, Bycio and Hausdorf (1994) and Mathieu and Zajac (1990) have produced insignificant relations. Studies by Meyer et al. (1989) and Suliman and Iles (2000), have produced significant positive relations.

The theoretical relation between psychological ownership and job satisfaction is well established (Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004; Vandewalle et al., 1995). Similar to job commitment, the empirical studies on the relations between job satisfaction and job performance have yielded inconclusive results. For example, studies by Iaffaldano and Muchinsky, (1985), and Schleicher, Watt and Greguras (2004) have shown insignificant relations. Studies by Petty, McGee, and Cavender (1984), Shore and Martin (1989), and Judge, Thoresen, Bono, and Patton (2001) have shown significant positive relations. The conceptual framework is given in Figure 1. In this research, we are mainly interested in the relations between psychological ownership and job commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance. Based on the aforementioned arguments, we tested the following hypothesis:

Psychological ownership has positive relations with job performance, job commitment, and job satisfaction.

METHOD

Location of Study and Population

As indicated earlier, the present study was conducted amongst lecturers in business schools of public universities in Malaysia. Why did we choose public universities in Malaysia? Because most of the earlier studies on psychological ownership were done in a Western setting, we chose a country from Southeast Asia that is fast becoming a regional center for excellence in education. In its quest to become a developed country by the year 2020, Malaysia has been emphasizing college education to increase the number of knowledgeable workers, especially technical and business graduates. There are 17 public universities in Malaysia and they play a significant role in the advancement of knowledge and production of knowledge workers. Business schools in Malaysia play a vital role by producing business graduates who can contribute to a higher economic growth.

Before embarking on the present study, we obtained permission from the Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia and wrote to the deans of all the business schools. Of 17, only 14 public universities expressed willingness to participate in the present study and the lecturers, senior lecturers, associate professors, and professors from these universities were included in the study.

Sampling Frame and Sampling Technique

The sampling frame for the study consisted of all teaching staff members (excluding tutors) whose names and e-mail addresses were provided in the business school's Web site. We collected the names and addresses of all the 1037 members. Our sampling instrument was a questionnaire and we sent the questionnaire to all the members of the staff, identified earlier, through e-mail. Along with the questionnaire we attached the approval letters from the ministry and the deans.

TABLE 1
Operationalization of All Constructs Except Job Performance

Variable	Source	Sample question	Interpretation of score	Cronbach Values**
Psychological ownership	Pierce, O’Driscoll & Coghlan (2004)	This is MY job	High score—higher level of psychological ownership	0.92
Job commitment	Van Der Veegt and Van De Vliert (2000)	I feel personally responsible for my work performance	High score—higher level of commitment	0.72
Job satisfaction	Agho, Price and Mueller (1992)	I feel fairly satisfied with my job	High score—higher level of satisfaction	0.90

*All the variables have been measured using a 5-point Likert-type scale: 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree.
**Cronbach values are based on earlier studies.

Questionnaire Design and Operationalization of Constructs

The questionnaire consisted of three major sections, ranging from Section A to C. The questions in the questionnaire are given in the Appendix. Section A dealt with job satisfaction, psychological ownership, and job commitment. Section B contained questions to assess the dimensions of job performance. Section C gathered the demographic profile such as job title, gender, age, race, job tenure, highest academic qualification, and monthly salary. Table 1 shows the operationalization of all constructs except job performance.

Operationalization of Job Performance

Research on job performance has taken two approaches to measure this construct. Although many researchers have looked at performance as a unidimensional concept, others have suggested that performance has a multidimensional nature (Meyer et al., 1989; Suliman, 2001). In the present study, job performance has been operationalized as a multidimensional construct, taking into consideration several activities of academicians: teaching, journal publication, professional presentations, instructional method, research support, professional service and college or university service. This measure has been adapted from a study by Farh, Werbel, and Bedeian (1988). In the questionnaire that was sent to the lecturers, the performance dimensions were addressed using two sections. The first section dealt with the student teaching evaluation and consisted of one item that was measured using a 5-point response scale. The second section assessed 13 performance activities that were measured using a 5-point response scale. The 13 performance measures covered the following areas: journal publications (refereed, nonrefereed, papers accepted for publication but not yet published), professional presentations (conferences, seminars, and workshops), instructional support (number of courses taught and the level), professional services (editorial assignment for journals, member of professional bodies, consulting services), and college or university support (administrative work).

DATA ANALYSIS

Number of Respondents and Their Profile

Of the 1,037 questionnaires sent through e-mail, only 347 returned after sending two reminders. Of 347, only 329 were usable. The unusable 18 questionnaires did not contain any information on the performance. We had a response rate of 33.5%. The profile of the respondents is given in Table 2. Some of the salient points about the profile are (a) majority of the respondents are lecturers and this is not unusual in Malaysian universities, (b) more than half of the respondents are female (this is consistent with the proportion of females [at the national level] going for higher education), and (c) majority of the lecturers belong to Malay race and it is not unusual in public universities in Malaysia.

Reliability and Validity Tests

These tests were conducted to assess the reliability and validity of the instrument. Reliability test was performed using Cronbach’s alpha and the validity test using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Table 3 gives the values for the reliability and validity tests and they are all within threshold levels prescribed by Hair et al. (2006).

Exploratory Factor Analysis of Job Performance

Performance assessment of academics involves many facets. An exploratory factor analysis has been performed on the 13 items to identify the main dimensions under the construct of job performance. Based on the results from the factor analysis, three main dimensions have been identified: (a) teaching (based on student evaluation), (b) publication (based on refereed journals; nonrefereed journals; and conference and seminar proceedings), and (c) editorial, supervisory, and professional services (ESP; based on member in masters committees; member in doctoral committees; editors for journals; reviewers for journals; elected position for professional organizations; consultant to professional bodies; member in college committees; and member in university committees).

TABLE 2
Profile of the Respondents

No.	Demographic Variable	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)	Cumulative Percentage (%)
1.	Job Title			
	Professor	14	4.3	4.3
	Associate Professor	60	18.2	22.5
	Lecturer	250	76.0	98.5
	Others	5	1.5	100.0
2.	Gender			
	Male	146	44.4	44.4
	Female	183	55.5	100.0
3.	Age			
	Less than 30 years old	57	17.3	17.3
	31 to 40 years old	160	48.6	66.0
	41 to 50 years old	83	25.2	91.2
	More than 50 years old	29	8.8	100.0
4.	Race			
	Malay	270	82.1	82.1
	Chinese	21	6.4	88.4
	Indian	16	4.9	93.3
	Others	22	6.7	100.0
5.	Academic Qualification			
	Doctorate	103	31.3	31.3
	Masters	226	68.7	100.0
6.	Job Tenure			
	Less than 1 year	8	2.4	2.4
	1 to 5 years	127	38.6	41.0
	6 to 10 years	82	24.9	66.0
	11 to 15 years	43	13.1	79.0
	More than 15 years	69	21.0	100.0
7.	Monthly Salary			
	Less than RM 3000	39	11.9	11.9
	RM 3000 to RM 5000	188	57.1	69.0
	More than RM 5000	102	31.0	100.0

N = 329.

Hypothesis Testing Based on Correlations

The present study consists of six variables: psychological ownership, job satisfaction, job commitment, and three di-

TABLE 3
Reliability and Validity Values for Various Constructs

Construct	Validity Test*			Cronbach Alpha
	RMSEA	GFI; CFI	Chi-square/Df; p-value	
Psychological ownership	0.075	0.97; 0.97	1.14; 0.08	0.90
Job commitment	0.10	0.97; 0.98	2.10; 0.01	0.76
Job satisfaction	0.099	0.96; 0.96	2.05; 0.01	0.85

*CFA was performed using LISREL 8.52.

TABLE 4
Correlation Coefficients

Construct	Mean	SD	PSYCHO	COMMIT	SATIS
PSYCHO	4.21	0.57	1.00		
COMMIT	4.34	0.49	0.57	1.00	
SATIS	4.10	0.57	0.60	0.38	1.00
Performance			PSYCHO	COMMIT	SATIS
Teaching			0.18	0.16	0.18
Publication			0.15	0.08	0.11
ESP			0.16	0.12	0.14

Numbers in bold indicate $p < .05$.

N = 329, Minimum score = 1, Maximum score = 5.

PSYCHO, Psychological ownership; COMMIT, Job commitment; SATIS, Job Satisfaction.

mensions of performance (teaching, publication, and ESP). To test the relations between these variables, a correlation analysis has been conducted. The mean values of the scores of the variables, as given in Table 4, indicate that the lecturers of business schools in Malaysia enjoy reasonable levels of psychological ownership, job commitment, and job satisfaction. From the correlation analysis, given in Table 4, the following conclusions can be drawn. Psychological ownership has strong, positive relations with job commitment ($r = .57, p < .01$) and job satisfaction ($r = .60, p < .01$). This result is consistent with the earlier studies (Vandewalle et al., 1995; Van Dyne & Pierce, 2004). With different dimensions of job performance, psychological ownership has significant relations, but not as strong as job satisfaction or job commitment. Psychological ownership has positive relationships with teaching ($r = .18, p < .05$), publication ($r = .15, p < .05$), and ESP ($r = .16, p < .05$). This result is consistent with the theory established by Pierce et al. (2001). Job commitment has positive relations with teaching ($r = .16, p < .05$) and ESP ($r = .12, p < .05$). Job satisfaction has positive relations with teaching ($r = .18, p < .05$), publication ($r = .11, p < .05$), and ESP ($r = .14, p < .05$).

DISCUSSION

Earlier studies by Mayhew et al. (2003), Van Dyne and Pierce (2004), and Vandewalle et al. (1995) have produced conflicting results. The present study with the business school lecturers shows a link between the psychological ownership and job performance. Based on the results from the model with performance dimensions as dependent variables, psychological ownership has significant, positive relations with all performance dimensions. Teaching, publication through research, and supervisory activities require intimate knowledge about the subject and investment of sufficient time and these in turn, increase the level of psychological ownership.

The present study has interesting theoretical and practical implications. Pierce et al. (2003) opine that studying psychological ownership across different cultural contexts may help in strengthening its concept. Previous studies on psychological ownership have been done in individualistic cultures and the level of feeling of ownership is high in these cultures. We conducted the present study in Malaysia, a country that has collectivist culture (Hofstede, 1980). The present study shows that psychological ownership is important in collectivist cultures too.

Academicians who have better control over their work tend to possess higher degrees of psychological ownership and this in turn, can directly impact their performance. The administrators, who are responsible for recruiting academic staff in the universities, should look for candidates with the right attitude in addition to qualifications. Employees with a right attitude toward the job generally perform well. Psychological ownership does affect job performance in an academic setting. Earlier studies have recognized providing autonomy to employees and allowing the employees to participate in decision making as antecedents of psychological ownership (O'Driscoll et al., 2006; Pierce et al., 2004). The deans and the heads of the departments must strive to provide an environment to their faculty members by providing them enough autonomy and by allowing them to participate in decision making. These can enhance their sense of psychological ownership and this enhanced sense is bound to reflect on the levels of commitment, satisfaction, and performance of the faculty members.

CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The basic objective of the present study has been to investigate the effect of psychological ownership on job commitment, job satisfaction, and job performance. The research on psychological ownership is still at an amorphous stage. Studies are being conducted under different scenarios to test its applicability. Earlier studies have not considered the impact of psychological ownership on job performance, job commitment, and job satisfaction of academicians. The present study has been carried out in an Eastern setting, unlike earlier studies and this makes research in the area of psychological ownership more comprehensive. We have shown empirically that psychological ownership has positive relations with job commitment, job satisfaction, and the three dimensions of performance.

The present study considered the faculty members from business schools of public universities. To generalize the findings, it will be appropriate to consider other faculties and private institutions. Our study used cross-sectional data from a single source. The future studies can consider longitudinal data from multiple sources to establish the causal

relationships and to reduce the effects from the same source. The future research should concentrate on more studies with psychological ownership toward different jobs.

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