

## **Academics' profile and perceived institutional leadership practices in public and private universities**

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**Abstract:** This study analyses the profiles of academics and their perceived institutional leadership practices at their universities. A questionnaire survey was conducted among 1771 academics from Malaysian public and private universities. The results of the survey show that women make up the majority of academics in universities, and most of them hold at least a master's degree. The academics at the universities have an average of more than six years of professional experience, and most of them are senior lecturers and associate professors. Many of the professors are or have been in senior positions. The study also shows that the majority of academics believe that the selection of senior staff at their universities is well controlled and that procedures are followed. Their universities also offer a talent pool system for institutional leaders. Academics are selected as institutional leaders on a rotational basis, and their appointment is duly publicized. However, the results of this study show that many universities continue to appoint and nominate future leaders under the old system rather than the new system. The study also shows that academics, whether from public or private universities, have similar views on the procedures of institutional leadership in their respective universities. The academics are generally in favor of the institutional governance approaches at their universities. The results of the study may be valuable in planning talent management for younger members of the academic community, as succession planning requires early intervention rather than identifying key leaders without a focus on talent management.

**Keywords:** Academics, Institutional leadership, Leadership, Profiling, Universities.

### **1. Introduction**

The modern, competitive, and knowledge-based society of today poses great challenges and opportunities for universities around the world, including Malaysia. Current challenges include the decline in student enrollment, the reduction in annual funding and scholarships available, and the introduction of a "hybrid" teaching and learning process that requires both students and faculty to have expert knowledge and access to the internet and high-quality technology. As a direct result, educational institutions are examining and analysing their methods to ensure that the problems can be solved effectively. One of the ways to overcome these challenges is through strong leadership. An institution's successful leadership practices, individual variable characteristics, development strategies, and academic and institutional development work together to create a university's unique leadership environment [1].

In light of this, institutional leaders such as academic administrators play an extremely important role in universities, and cultivating institutional leadership is essential to meeting the challenges of the

modern world. However, studies such as Parrish [2] and Caliskan and Zhu [3] have found that academics leading a university lack competence and institutional leadership skills. These studies also found that academics in universities are often in a supervisory environment with few opportunities for advancement Smith and Wolverson [4]. Garwe [5], on the other hand, found that many academics who hold institutional leadership positions have limited practical and management experience. A review of leadership literature has also provided limited evidence, particularly in the context of Malaysia.

This study examines educational leadership, with a particular focus on institutional leadership. In particular, this study examines the profiles of academics and their perceptions of institutional leadership practices at their universities. The results of this study would provide an important source of information that includes not only basic profiles such as age and gender but also information about their perceived institutional leadership practices. The remainder of this paper is organised as follows: The next section, Section 2, contains the literature review relevant to this study. Section 3, which describes the study's research design, and Section 4, which presents the findings and discussion, follows this.

## 2. Literature Review

Throughout the years, a substantial amount of writing has focused on the subject of leadership. Burns [6] said that proficient directors stimulate and encourage their teams by appealing to the members' inherent drive. Burns [6], credited with establishing the first notion of leadership, characterized a real leader as one capable of aligning the actions of followers with the motives of both leaders and followers. Burns also emphasized that leaders and followers are engaged in a shared endeavor, which is essential since without them, the endeavor would become meaningless. Both academics and professionals in the sector have dedicated decades to comprehending the significance of leadership. Despite being well acknowledged as a frequently seen occurrence, there is little understanding of the fundamental dynamic mechanisms that drive it [6-8].

According to Burns [6], leadership is a phenomenon that is widely seen but not well understood. Undoubtedly, leadership is a complex endeavor that has puzzled experts and practitioners for millennia. Following Burns' study, considerable discourse has been devoted to leadership in organizations, which is to be expected given the importance of the topic. Organizations are increasingly faced with more demands, such as the need for change, choice, flexibility, and diversity, which are seen as critical elements [9, 10]. In line with Burns' research, Kouzes and Posner [11] defined leadership as the dynamic connection between individuals who want to lead and those who want to be led. In their work, Dugan and Komives [12] gave a concise definition of leadership as a phenomenon that is relationship-oriented, transformational, process-oriented, learned, and change-oriented.

Extensive research in the realm of leadership has explored the subject of leadership from many viewpoints and perspectives. The majority of these studies have analyzed leadership in a comprehensive framework and have determined that successful leadership requires a capable leader who can motivate subordinates to synchronize their activities with the objectives of their company, irrespective of their characteristics [13]. Despite the extensive research conducted on educational leadership with the intention of establishing clear and globally accepted definitions, a universally acknowledged definition has yet to be established. Within the present discussion on educational leadership, there are several definitions that include elements of administration, leadership, and management. As a result, these definitions help to differentiate between these various components within the subject [14].

In his study, Dimmock [15] discovered that leaders often face conflicts that stem from the contradictory elements of leadership, management, and administration. No matter what these terms mean, it can be hard for leaders to find a good balance between their more important duties (like improving the skills of their staff, students, and overall performance; leadership) and their less important duties (like running the day-to-day operations; management) and the less important tasks (administration) [15]. This perspective aligns with Yukl [16] claim that the "designation of leadership is arbitrary and exceedingly subjective." While some definitions may be more practical than others, there is no final or universally accurate definition [16]. Leadership in education stands out for being

dynamic, complex, and multidimensional [17]. Given the dynamic and unpredictable nature of the last decade, there are several opportunities to investigate. Taylor [1] asserted that a distinct association exists between effective leadership and the successful implementation of leadership in universities. Individual characteristics, developmental objectives, academic obligations, and the organizational context all interact to shape leadership in an academic setting.

Educational leadership may be categorized into two distinct sub-domains: academic leadership and institutional leadership. Academic leadership refers to researchers who are acknowledged as authorities in their specific areas of expertise and actively engage in endeavors that provide substantial influence [18]. The primary objective of academic leadership is to cultivate academics who serve as public intellectuals, actively sharing knowledge within their respective domains. In order to be recognized as experts in their profession, academic leaders must consistently demonstrate the highest level of integrity when it comes to facilitating meaningful community involvement and implementing novel pedagogical or methodological practices.

Institutional leadership, in contrast, pertains to academics who exhibit managerial prowess through their ability to adapt, be flexible, think strategically, and, most importantly, achieve desired outcomes. These individuals are the leaders of universities. These individuals are often known as senior and middle leaders inside the institution due to their capacity to carry out management and administrative responsibilities in order to achieve the university's vision and goal [19-21]. Typically, the appointment to the leadership role at the institution is of a transitory nature. Throughout their tenure, they are required to exhibit proficient management and leadership abilities. This encompasses the formulation of concise, intermediate, and extended plans that align with the predetermined goals established prior to the institution's inception. Furthermore, an institutional leader must consistently demonstrate attentiveness towards the demands and concerns of their subordinates while effectively managing a harmonious equilibrium between these aspects and the objectives of the organization. They have a responsibility to the management to promote the growth of the skills and abilities of academic and administrative personnel, as well as to provide them with chances and assistance. In addition, it is necessary for them to possess vision and foresight, as well as the capacity to maintain a balance between idealism and reality, while adopting an optimistic but pragmatic attitude.

Syed-Mohamad, et al. [22] argued that institutional leaders should integrate their expertise in strategic management with comprehensive human values in order to enhance the welfare of students, staff, society, and the nation. To do this, it is necessary to merge their expertise in strategic management with their comprehensive human values. They possess the ability to maintain a harmonious equilibrium between reality and idealism while also embracing optimism and pragmatism. This gift empowers individuals to achieve success in life, along with the capacity to inspire and encourage others. Within the realm of universities, positions such as dean, deputy vice chancellor, and vice chancellor are instances of institutional leadership posts that have traditionally been seen as temporary appointments. For the benefit of all parties involved, including students, professors, departments, and other stakeholders, it is important for universities to maintain a balance between academic leadership and institutional leadership [21, 23]. Educational leadership encompasses the amalgamation of an individual's diverse personal traits, personal growth strategies, academic responsibilities, and institutional context. Positions of institutional leadership, such as dean, associate vice chancellor, and vice chancellor, are often regarded as temporary appointments for a certain duration.

Several studies in the leadership literature have shown that profiling may be a viable approach for identifying individuals who might be well-suited for a leadership role. According to Müller and Turner [24], profiling entails examining a leader's particular blend of behavioral, temperamental, emotional, and mental traits in order to determine their particular leadership style. Profiling is often used to establish a correlation between the dimensions of success or failure in a person's leadership role. It is also used to choose or train leaders by comparing the profiles of successful leaders with those of potential candidates for leadership roles. Profiling is a challenging endeavour that may require the

creation of a technology to evaluate the aptitude of the managers being profiled. This is due to the fact that every time the organization attempted to create such a tool, it faced various challenges.

### 3. Research Design

#### 3.1. The Participants

The respondents in this study consist of academics at public and private universities in Malaysia. As of December 31, 2021, there were 31,568 academics in the public universities and 28,570 academics in the private universities [25]. For the purpose of this study, only professors, associate professors, and lecturers were included in the sample, so the total number of academics in public universities is 29,496 and that of academics in private universities is 25,498. This study relied on the sample size table of Krejcie and Morgan [26] and used stratified random sampling to determine the sample size. The academics were then categorized into two groups, namely academics at public universities (IPTA) and academics at private universities (IPTS). Based on the stratified random sample, the sample size in this study was determined to be 1,053 academics in IPTA and 873 academics in IPTS, making the total sample size required for these studies 1,928 academics. Table 1 shows the sample of respondents in this study.

**Table 1.**  
Sample of respondents.

| Academics   | Position            | Population | Sample size |
|-------------|---------------------|------------|-------------|
| IPTA        | Professor           | 1885       | 318         |
|             | Associate professor | 4889       | 357         |
|             | Lecturers           | 22,722     | 378         |
| Total       |                     | 29,496     | 1,053       |
| IPTS        | Professor           | 554        | 226         |
|             | Associate professor | 933        | 272         |
|             | Lecturers           | 24,011     | 377         |
| Total       |                     | 25,498     | 875         |
| Grand total |                     | 54,994     | 1,928       |

**Note:** IPTA-Public Universities, IPTS-Private Universities.

#### 3.2. Research Instrument

In this study, a questionnaire survey was used as a research instrument. The questionnaire was developed on the basis of a literature review. The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section A consists of a series of demographic profile questions, including gender, highest academic degree, work experience at the current university, and experience in an administrative position at the current university. Section B asks respondents to answer a series of questions about perceived institutional leadership practices at their university. In this section, respondents were asked to provide their opinions on 11 statements related to institutional leadership, such as that the selection of deans, directors, and associate directors at my university is highly regulated, that leadership appointments at my university are effectively communicated, that my university uses an elective system in selecting institutional leaders, that my university plans institutional leaders to achieve its vision, and that my university plans institutional leaders to fulfil its mission.

#### 3.3. Data Collection

Email was the primary method of contact with the academics. Prior to data collection, the researchers conducted a workshop with a group of professors from a public university. The aim of this workshop was to utilise the professors' knowledge and experience in reviewing the questionnaire design

and to look for ways to improve the quality of the questionnaire while achieving its objectives. Thirteen professors from different fields participated in the review of the draft questionnaire. After revising and improving the questionnaire, this study conducted a pilot study with three academics at public and private universities. This was to determine whether the respondents could understand and easily complete the questionnaire. A total of 1,771 completed questionnaires were collected. This number of responses collected does not correspond to the expected sample of respondents identified in this study. However, the total number of responses collected is considered sufficient as the difference is not significant ( $1,928 - 1,771 = 157$ ). The aggregated responses are shown in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2.**  
Collected responses.

| Academics   | Position            | Required sample size | Collected responses |
|-------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| IPTA        | Professor           | 318                  | 93                  |
|             | Associate professor | 357                  | 386                 |
|             | Lecturers           | 378                  | 593                 |
| Total       |                     | 1,053                | 1,072               |
| IPTS        | Professor           | 226                  | 28                  |
|             | Associate professor | 272                  | 285                 |
|             | Lecturers           | 377                  | 386                 |
| Total       |                     | 875                  | 699                 |
| Grand total |                     | 1928                 | 1,771               |

**Note:** IPTA-Public Universities, IPTS-Private Universities.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Academics' Profiling in the Universities

In this study, the profiles of the academics were based on two categories, namely the personal profile and the work-related profile. [Table 3](#) shows how the respondents represent academics in higher education. As shown in [Table 3](#), 730 (41.2 percent) of the respondents are male, while 1,041 (58.8 percent) are female. This study shows that most of the respondents (43.1 percent) are 31 to 40 years old, followed by 41 to 50 years old (37.4 percent). [Table 3](#) demonstrates that a sizable portion of respondents (65.2 percent) have a PhD, and those with a Master's degree (33 percent) are second. The remaining 1.8 percent of respondents hold a bachelor's degree. Understandably, this group of respondents is often on the lower rung of the academic ladder, i.e., lecturers.

**Table 3.**  
Respondents' individual-related profile.

| Gender             | N     | Percent |
|--------------------|-------|---------|
| Male               | 730   | 41.2    |
| Female             | 1,041 | 58.8    |
| Age                |       |         |
| Below 30 years old | 47    | 10      |
| 31 to 40 years old | 203   | 43.1    |
| 41 to 50 years old | 176   | 37.4    |
| Above 50 years old | 45    | 9.6     |
| Education level    |       |         |
| Degree             | 32    | 1.8     |
| Masters            | 585   | 33      |
| PhD                | 1154  | 65.2    |

There are currently 20 IPTAs and 50 IPTS across Malaysia. Table 4 shows that more than half of the respondents are enrolled in IPTA (60.5 percent), while 39.5 percent are enrolled in IPTS. According to additional analysis, the majority of respondents (25.5 percent) have 11 to 15 years of work experience at their current university, with those with more than 20 years of experience (23.3 percent) and those with 6 to 10 years of experience (20.4 percent) following. Of the 1771 respondents, 353 had 16 to 20 years' experience, and only 10.8 percent had less than 5 years' experience.

Table 4 also shows the respondents' work experience at their current university. In this study the respondents with more than 20 years of experience (28.5%) outnumber those with 6 to 10 years of experience (21.3%), 11 to 15 years of experience (20.2%), and 16 to 20 years of experience (20.1%). Only 9.8 percent of respondents have less than 5 years' experience. On the other hand, this IPTS study reveals that the majority of respondents (33.6 percent) have 11 to 15 years of experience, while respondents with 16 to 20 years of experience (19.6 percent), and respondents with 6 to 10 years of experience (19 percent) follow. The study also shows that respondents with more than 20 years of experience make up 15.3 percent, and the remaining 12.4 percent are respondents with less than 5 years of experience.

**Table 4.**  
Respondents' work-related profile.

| Education level            | N     | Percent |
|----------------------------|-------|---------|
| IPTA                       | 1,072 | 60.5    |
| IPTS                       | 699   | 39.5    |
| Experience                 | N     | Percent |
| Less than 5 years          | 192   | 10.8    |
| 6 to 10 years              | 361   | 20.4    |
| 11 to 15 years             | 452   | 25.5    |
| 16 to 20 years             | 353   | 19.9    |
| More than 20 years         | 413   | 23.3    |
| IPTA academics' experience | N     | Percent |
| Less than 5 years          | 105   | 9.8     |
| 6 to 10 years              | 228   | 21.3    |
| 11 to 15 years             | 217   | 20.2    |
| 16 to 20 years             | 216   | 20.1    |
| More than 20 years         | 306   | 28.5    |
| IPTS academics' experience | N     | Percent |
| Less than 5 years          | 87    | 12.4    |
| 6 to 10 years              | 133   | 19.0    |
| 11 to 15 years             | 235   | 33.6    |
| 16 to 20 years             | 137   | 19.6    |
| More than 20 years         | 107   | 15.3    |

Note: IPTA-Public Universities, IPTS-Private Universities.

Ministry of Higher Education [25] referred to the lecturers as senior lecturers and lecturers. For the purpose of this study, senior lecturers and lecturers are reported separately to provide a better understanding of the roles of these two groups in administrative positions, as shown in Table 5. This study shows that most of the respondents are associate professors (34.3 percent). This is followed by senior lecturers (34.3 percent) and lecturers (21%). As expected, respondents who are professors make up only 6.8 percent of respondents in this study.

**Table 5.**  
Respondents' position grade.

| Position grade      | N   | Percent |
|---------------------|-----|---------|
| Lecturer            | 372 | 21      |
| Senior lecturer     | 601 | 34.3    |
| Associate professor | 671 | 37.9    |
| Professor           | 121 | 6.8     |
| IPTA position grade | N   | Percent |
| Lecturer            | 188 | 17.5    |
| Senior lecturer     | 405 | 37.8    |
| Associate professor | 386 | 36.0    |
| Professor           | 93  | 8.7     |
| IPTS position grade | N   | Percent |
| Lecturer            | 184 | 3.4     |
| Senior lecturer     | 202 | 22.9    |
| Associate professor | 285 | 28.9    |
| Professor           | 28  | 40.8    |

**Note:** IPTA-Public Universities, IPTS-Private Universities.

On closer inspection, this study reveals that senior lecturers (37.8 percent) make the majority of IPTA respondents, with associate professors coming in second with 36 percent and lecturers coming in third with 17.5 percent. Only 8.7 percent of respondents are professors, as shown in Table 5. In terms of IPTS respondents, Table 5 shows that most of the respondents are associate professors (40.8 percent). Senior lecturers (26.3%) are the respondents who come after this.

**Table 6.**  
Respondents' administrative position.

| Administrative position            | N   | Percent |
|------------------------------------|-----|---------|
| Yes, currently                     | 853 | 48.2    |
| Yes, but no longer                 | 636 | 35.9    |
| Never                              | 282 | 15.9    |
| IPTS administrative position       | N   | Percent |
| Yes, currently                     | 439 | 41.0    |
| Yes, but no longer                 | 435 | 40.6    |
| Never                              | 198 | 18.5    |
| Experience administrative position | N   | Percent |
| Yes, currently                     | 414 | 59.2    |
| Yes, but no longer                 | 201 | 28.8    |
| Never                              | 84  | 12      |

**Note:** IPTA-Public Universities, IPTS-Private Universities.

The respondents were also asked whether they had ever held an academic administrative post. According to Table 6, the majority of respondents hold an administrative position currently, with respondents who once held an administrative position but no longer do (35.9 percent) and respondents who have never held an administrative position (15.9 percent) following. A further analysis shows that 41 percent of respondents currently hold an administrative position, while 40.6 percent of respondents have held an administrative position at IPTA, albeit for a longer period of time. Only 18.5 percent of respondents have never held an administrative position, as shown in Table 6. This study also shows that more than half of the respondents in the IPTS currently hold an administrative position (59.2

percent). On the other hand, 28.8 percent of respondents who previously held an administrative position no longer do so. The remaining 12 percent of respondents have never held an administrative position, as shown in Table 6.

In this study, further analyses are conducted to determine the profile of respondents in terms of their administrative position and professional experience, Table 7 shows the results. According to the results, respondents with 11 to 15 years of work experience are most likely to hold an administrative position (25 percent), before respondents with 16 to 20 years of work experience (24 percent), and respondents with more than 20 years of work experience (20 percent). Respondents with less than 10 years of professional experience also currently hold an administrative position (30 percent). According to study, the proportion of respondents who once held an administrative position but no longer do so is the highest among those with more than 20 years of professional experience 34 percent, then among those 11 to 15 years 28 percent and respondents with 16 to 20 years at 18 percent. The study also shows that 79 percent of respondents with less than 15 years of work experience have never held an administrative position. This is to be expected, as many of them want to focus on academic leadership first before moving into institutional leadership. Surprisingly, 9 percent of respondents who have worked for more than 20 years have never held an administrative position.

**Table 7.**  
Respondents' administrative position and working experience.

| <b>Position /Years</b>     | <b>&lt;5%</b> | <b>6-10%</b> | <b>11-15%</b> | <b>16-20%</b> | <b>&gt;20%</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|
| Yes, currently             | 12            | 18           | 25            | 24            | 20             |
| Yes, but no longer         | 5             | 16           | 28            | 18            | 34             |
| Never                      | 20            | 37           | 22            | 12            | 9              |
| <b>IPTA position/Years</b> | <b>&lt;5%</b> | <b>6-10%</b> | <b>11-15%</b> | <b>16-20%</b> | <b>&gt;20%</b> |
| Yes, currently             | 13            | 16           | 19            | 24            | 28             |
| Yes, but no longer         | 2             | 18           | 22            | 19            | 38             |
| Never                      | 19            | 40           | 18            | 15            | 9              |
| <b>IPTS position/Years</b> | <b>&lt;5%</b> | <b>6-10%</b> | <b>11-15%</b> | <b>16-20%</b> | <b>&gt;20%</b> |
| Yes, currently             | 2             | 21           | 29            | 43            | 5              |
| Yes, but no longer         | 4             | 22           | 33            | 37            | 4              |
| Never                      | 10            | 33           | 21            | 36            | 0              |

**Note:** IPTA-Public Universities, IPTS-Private Universities.

Table 7 shows that respondents in the IPTA with more than 20 years of experience are most likely to hold an administrative position (28 percent). Following this are respondents with 16 to 20 years of experience (24 percent) and respondents with 11 to 15 years' experience (19 percent). The study also reveals that respondents with more than 20 years of experience used to hold an administrative position but no longer do so as frequently (38 percent) follow by the respondents with 11 to 15 years of experience (22 percent), and respondents with 16 to 20 years of experience (19 percent). However, the study also shows that there are respondents who have never held an administrative position, even though they have more than 20 years of experience (9 percent). According to IPTS, senior lecturers (29 percent) and lecturers (21 percent) are the next-highest percentages of respondents who currently hold an administrative position after associate professor (43 percent) do so. Associate professors (37 percent) are the most common respondents who once held an administrative position but no longer do, followed by senior lecturers (33 percent), and lecturers (22 percent). A similar trend can be seen among those who previously held an administrative position and those who have never held an administrative position. As shown in Table 7, respondents who are professors have the lowest number of current



administrative positions, and respondents who previously held an administrative position no longer hold one.

Table 8 shows the results reflecting the profile of respondents in terms of their administrative position and rank. The result shows that 41 percent of the respondents who hold an administrative position are associate professors, followed by 32 percent of the respondents who are senior lecturers, and 20 percent of the respondents are lecturers. A similar trend is seen among respondents who used to hold an administrative position but no longer do. This study shows that 41 percent of respondents are associate professors, 33 percent are senior lecturers, and 15 percent are lecturers. However, the results show that most of the respondents who have never held an administrative position are senior lecturers (45 percent), followed by lecturers (30 percent), and associate professors (18 percent). Further analysis shows that Associate Professors hold the most administrative positions in IPTA (41 percent), followed by Senior Lecturers (35 percent) and Lecturers (17 percent). Only 7 percent of professors hold an administrative position.

A similar trend can be seen among those who used to hold an administrative position but no longer do. Senior lecturers (33 percent) and lecturers (12 percent) are in second and third place, respectively, behind associate professors with a 43 percent share. However, there are also respondents who are senior lecturers and lecturers who have never held an administrative position, at 56 percent and 30 percent, respectively, as shown in Table 8. Table 8 shows the results of the profile of respondents by administrative position and level of position. For IPTS, the results also show that 43 percent of respondents who are Associate Professors currently hold an administrative position. Senior lecturers come in second at 29%, and lecturers come in third at 23%. Thirty-seven percent of respondents who are associate professors used to hold an administrative position but no longer do, while respondents who are senior lecturers make up 33 percent and lecturers, 26 percent. The results also show that lecturers and associate professors are those who have never held an administrative position, at 43 percent and 36 percent, respectively. Interestingly, all IPTS professors have either previously or currently held an administrative position.

**Table 8.**  
Respondents' administrative position and position grade.

| <b>Position /Years</b>     | <b>Lect%</b>  | <b>SL %</b> | <b>AP %</b> | <b>Prof. %</b> |
|----------------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|----------------|
| Yes, currently             | 20            | 32          | 42          | 6              |
| Yes, but no longer         | 16            | 33          | 41          | 10             |
| Never                      | 34            | 45          | 18          | 2              |
| <b>IPTA position/Years</b> | <b>Lect%.</b> | <b>SL %</b> | <b>AP %</b> | <b>Prof. %</b> |
| Yes, currently             | 17            | 35          | 41          | 7              |
| Yes, but no longer         | 12            | 33          | 43          | 13             |
| Never                      | 30            | 56          | 11          | 4              |
| <b>IPTS position/Years</b> | <b>Lect%</b>  | <b>SL %</b> | <b>AP %</b> | <b>Prof. %</b> |
| Yes, currently             | 23            | 29          | 43          | 5              |
| Yes, but no longer         | 26            | 33          | 37          | 4              |
| Never                      | 43            | 21          | 36          | 0              |

**Note:** Lect=Lecturer, SL=Senior lecturer, AP= Associate professor, Prof.= Professor, IPTA=Public Universities, IPTS=Private Universities.

In this study, a further analysis was then conducted to determine whether respondents who currently hold or have held an administrative position are compelled to do so. The results are shown in Table 9. Table 9 shows that of the 853 respondents who currently hold an administrative position, 37 percent have been forced to hold an administrative position in some way. The result also shows that of the 636 respondents who held an administrative position in the past, 40 percent were forced to do so in some way. Table 9 shows that at IPTA, of the 439 respondents who previously held an administrative

position but no longer do so, 40 percent were more likely to have been forced to do so. Of the 435 respondents who used to hold an administrative position but no longer do, 34 percent felt somewhat compelled to do so. Similar results were found for IPTS academics. Of the 414 respondents who currently hold an administrative position, 34 percent felt somewhat compelled to do so. However, among respondents who previously held an administrative position but no longer do, the percentage of those who feel somewhat compelled to hold an administrative position is higher at 52 percent.

**Table 9.**

Respondents' administrative position experience and willingness (In percent).

| <b>Administrative position</b>      | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-----------|
| Yes, currently                      | 37         | 63        |
| Yes, but no longer                  | 40         | 60        |
| <b>IPTA administrative position</b> | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| Yes, currently                      | 40         | 60        |
| Yes, but no longer                  | 34         | 66        |
| <b>IPTS administrative position</b> | <b>Yes</b> | <b>No</b> |
| Yes, currently                      | 34         | 66        |
| Yes, but no longer                  | 52         | 48        |

**Note:** IPTA-Public Universities, IPTS-Private Universities.

#### 4.2. Academics' Perceived Institutional Leadership Practices in their University

The aim of this study was to shed light on academics' perceptions of institutional leadership practices at their universities. The respondents were asked to complete a section on institutional leadership practices at their university. This section consists of 11 questions. Table 10 shows the descriptive statistics of academics' perceptions of institutional leadership practices at their university. The three statements that received the highest mean score are the statement 'The Vice-Chancellor or Registrar of my university announces the institutional governance structure every year' with a mean score of 4.18, followed by the statement 'My university selects the Deans, Directors, and Deputy Directors very regularly' and the statement 'My university selects the Deans, Directors, and Deputy Directors through due process', both of which received a mean score of 4.16. In percentage terms, the statement 'My university selects deans, directors, and deputy directors in a very orderly manner' received the highest score with 76 percent. This was followed by three statements with 74 percent, namely 'My university selects deans, directors, and deputy directors in an orderly manner', 'The vice chancellor or chancellor of my university announces the institutional leadership structure every year', and 'My university plans institutional leaders to fulfil its mission'.

The respondents also agreed 73 percent to the statement 'My university plans institutional leaders to achieve its vision' and 72 percent to the statement 'My university's leadership ensures excellence'. These results suggest that universities select their leaders with the expectation that these leaders can take their universities to a higher level in terms of quality of education and university ranking. Respondents also responded in the affirmative to the statement that 'leadership appointments at my university are communicated effectively' (73 percent). This indicates that universities announce the appointment of new leaders through official media platforms, such as email. An interesting finding is that 59 percent of respondents disagreed with the statement, 'My university uses an election system to select institutional leaders'. This result suggests that most universities still select their leaders based on a combination of nominations and departmental recommendations.

**Table 10.**  
Descriptive statistics of perceived institutional leadership (In percent).

| No | Statement   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Moderately disagree | Moderately agree | Agree | Strongly agree | Mean |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|---------------------|------------------|-------|----------------|------|
| 1  | My university selects deans, directors and assistant directors is highly regulated.                   | 8                 | 8        | 9                   | 27               | 33    | 16             | 4.16 |
| 2  | My university selects deans, directors, and deputies using proper procedures.                         | 6                 | 10       | 11                  | 25               | 35    | 14             | 4.16 |
| 3  | Leadership appointments in my university are communicated effectively.                                | 6                 | 11       | 9                   | 29               | 29    | 15             | 4.09 |
| 4  | My university's Vice Chancellor or Registrar announces institutional leadership structure every year. | 8                 | 7        | 10                  | 23               | 34    | 17             | 4.18 |
| 5  | My university has a document or a system identifying talent pools for institutional leadership.       | 13                | 12       | 14                  | 27               | 25    | 9              | 3.66 |
| 6  | My university's institutional leadership ensures leadership continuity.                               | 12                | 11       | 14                  | 25               | 28    | 10             | 3.76 |
| 7  | My university uses job rotation to give academics a chance to take on leadership roles.               | 12                | 11       | 14                  | 28               | 26    | 10             | 3.74 |
| 8  | My university uses voting system in selecting institutional leaders.                                  | 26                | 16       | 16                  | 18               | 17    | 6              | 3.02 |
| 9  | My university's leadership ensures excellence.  | 10                | 9        | 11                  | 26               | 30    | 16             | 4.05 |
| 10 | My university plans institutional leaders to achieve its mission.                                     | 9                 | 9        | 9                   | 29               | 31    | 14             | 4.06 |
| 11 | My university plans institutional leaders to achieve its vision.                                      | 9                 | 8        | 9                   | 26               | 32    | 15             | 4.09 |

**Table 11.**  
Descriptive statistics of perceived institutional leadership in IPTA (In percent).

| No | Statement   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Moderately disagree | Moderately agree | Agree | Strongly agree | Mean |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|---------------------|------------------|-------|----------------|------|
| 1  | My university selects deans, directors and assistant directors is highly regulated.                   | 5                 | 7        | 9                   | 25               | 38    | 15             | 4.29 |
| 2  | My university selects deans, directors, and deputies using proper procedures.                         | 5                 | 8        | 9                   | 24               | 40    | 14             | 4.27 |
| 3  | Leadership appointments in my university are communicated effectively.                                | 4                 | 10       | 7                   | 32               | 33    | 14             | 4.23 |
| 4  | My university's Vice Chancellor or Registrar announces institutional leadership structure every year. | 6                 | 8        | 9                   | 24               | 38    | 16             | 4.27 |
| 5  | My university has a document or a system identifying talent pools for institutional leadership.       | 7                 | 10       | 14                  | 28               | 30    | 11             | 3.96 |
| 6  | My university's institutional leadership ensures leadership continuity.                               | 7                 | 10       | 13                  | 27               | 31    | 12             | 4.02 |
| 7  | My university uses job rotation to give academics a chance to take on leadership roles.               | 8                 | 9        | 13                  | 28               | 31    | 12             | 4.01 |
| 8  | My university uses voting system in selecting institutional leaders.                                  | 15                | 14       | 19                  | 20               | 23    | 9              | 3.48 |
| 9  | My university's leadership ensures excellence.  | 9                 | 5        | 8                   | 30               | 29    | 18             | 4.18 |
| 10 | My university plans institutional leaders to achieve its mission.                                     | 8                 | 7        | 7                   | 32               | 30    | 17             | 4.20 |
| 11 | My university plans institutional leaders to achieve its vision.                                      | 8                 | 6        | 7                   | 29               | 33    | 17             | 4.25 |

**Table 12.**

Descriptive statistics of perceived institutional leadership in IPTS (In percent).

| No | Statement   | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Moderately disagree | Moderately agree | Agree | Strongly agree | Mean |
|----|---|-------------------|----------|---------------------|------------------|-------|----------------|------|
| 1  | My university selects deans, directors and assistant directors is highly regulated.                   | 11                | 10       | 8                   | 29               | 25    | 16             | 3.96 |
| 2  | My university selects deans, directors, and deputies using proper procedures.                         | 7                 | 11       | 14                  | 27               | 27    | 14             | 3.99 |
| 3  | Leadership appointments in my university are communicated effectively.                                | 10                | 13       | 12                  | 26               | 23    | 16             | 3.87 |
| 4  | My university's Vice Chancellor or Registrar announces institutional leadership structure every year. | 12                | 7        | 12                  | 22               | 28    | 18             | 4.04 |
| 5  | My university has a document or a system identifying talent pools for institutional leadership.       | 22                | 15       | 14                  | 24               | 18    | 6              | 3.20 |
| 6  | My university's institutional leadership ensures leadership continuity.                               | 20                | 12       | 16                  | 23               | 23    | 6              | 3.35 |
| 7  | My university uses job rotation to give academics a chance to take on leadership roles.               | 17                | 15       | 15                  | 29               | 17    | 6              | 3.33 |
| 8  | My university uses voting system in selecting institutional leaders.                                  | 44                | 18       | 13                  | 15               | 9     | 2              | 2.32 |
| 9  | My university's leadership ensures excellence.  | 10                | 14       | 14                  | 19               | 31    | 12             | 3.84 |
| 10 | My university plans institutional leaders to achieve its mission.                                     | 11                | 12       | 11                  | 24               | 31    | 11             | 3.86 |
| 11 | My university plans institutional leaders to achieve its vision.                                      | 11                | 11       | 13                  | 22               | 31    | 11             | 3.86 |

A further analysis was conducted to examine how academics perceive institutional leadership practices in the respective IPTAs and IPTS. The results are presented in [Tables 11](#) and [12](#). In comparison, respondents in IPTA have a higher overall mean score than respondents in IPTS. The highest mean score for IPTA respondents is 4.29, while the highest mean score for IPTS respondents is 4.04. In IPTA, the highest mean score of respondents is for the statement 'The selection of deans, directors, and deputy directors in my university is highly regulated' (4.29), while in IPTS, the highest mean score of respondents is for the statement 'The vice chancellor or chancellor of my university announces the institutional leadership structure every year' (4.04). The three statements with the highest mean score are 'My university selects deans, directors, and deputy directors in a highly regulated manner' (4.29), 'The vice chancellor or chancellor of my university announces the institutional governance structure every year' and 'My university selects deans, directors, and deputy directors through due process', all of which scored a mean score of 4.27 as shown in [Table 11](#).

In terms of percentage of IPTA, three statements, namely 'My university selects deans, directors, and deputy directors in a very orderly manner', 'My university plans institutional leaders to achieve its vision', and 'Leadership appointments at my university are communicated effectively', received the highest percentage at 79 percent. This is followed by three statements with 78 percent, namely, 'My university selects deans, directors, and deputies according to due process', 'The vice chancellor or chancellor of my university announces the institutional leadership structure every year', and 'My university plans institutional leaders to achieve its mission'. For IPTS, on the other hand, respondents gave the highest percentage of 71 percent for the statement 'My university selects deans, directors, and associate directors through a highly regulated process'. This was followed by the statement 'The vice chancellor or chancellor of my university announces the institutional leadership structure each year' with 69 percent and the statement 'My university selects deans, directors, and deputy directors through a regulated process' with 68 percent.

When comparing IPTA and IPTS, both groups gave low agreement to the statement, 'My university uses an electoral system for selecting institutional leaders'. IPTA respondents agreed with 48 percent that their university does not use an election system to select its institutional leaders. IPTS respondents also disagreed with the statement, 'My university uses an electoral system for the selection of institutional leaders'. However, the proportion of those who disagreed with the statement was significantly higher (75 percent). This indicates that respondents answered that their university still uses traditional nomination and departmental recommendations to select their institutional leaders, as shown in [Table 12](#).

## 5. Conclusion

Universities, regardless of whether they are public or private, face a variety of challenges and constraints. Against this backdrop, cultivating institutional leadership among academics is an essential component for the survival of educational institutions in this age of intense competition. To meet the challenges of the modern world, understanding the culture of institutional leadership in universities will help universities develop a distinctive leadership environment. This study therefore examines the profiles of academics and their perceived practices of institutional leadership in their universities. For this study, a questionnaire survey was conducted among 1771 academics in public and private universities in Malaysia. The study shows that academics at the universities mostly hold at least a Master's degree or a PhD in their respective fields. Between 31- and 50-year-old female academics predominate in universities. University academics can be categorized into two main groups: IPTA academics who work in public universities and IPTS academics who work in private universities. Most of the academics who participated in this study work at public universities. The academics have on average more than six years of professional experience, and most of them are senior lecturers and associate professors. Most of the academics hold or have held administrative positions. There are academics who currently hold or have held administrative positions and are, to some extent, forced to do so.

In terms of institutional leadership practices as perceived by academics, this study shows that most academics believe that the selection of institutional leaders at their universities is highly regulated and follows selection procedures. Their universities also have a talent pool system for institutional leadership. Academics are appointed as institutional leaders on a rotational basis, and once appointed, this is effectively communicated. In addition, universities plan their institutional leadership to achieve their mission and vision. However, there are also universities that still use the traditional method of appointing and recommending potential institutional leaders rather than utilizing the elective system. This study also shows that academics have similar views on institutional leadership practices at their universities, regardless of whether they are IPTA academics or IPTS academics. Academics are generally favorable towards their university's institutional governance practices.

To summarize, the findings of this study provide a better understanding of the profile of academics and a checklist for institutional leadership practices in universities in Malaysia. Universities could provide awareness programs on the concepts of academic leadership and institutional leadership and the differences between these two concepts. For example, by offering in-house training programs, they can make academics aware of these two concepts and their importance to their careers as academics. This awareness would encourage academics to fulfil their roles better and increase their credibility as academics.

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The Ethical Committee of the of Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia has granted approval for this study on 9 May 2022 (Ref. No. REC/04/2022 (ST/MR/70)).

### **Transparency:**

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

### **Competing Interests:**

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

### **Authors' Contributions:**

All authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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