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Research Paper

Women Academic Voices on Organisational Climate Leader's Views in Malaysia's Public Universities

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Abstract

Higher education institutions in Malaysia should be able to provide an ecosystem that is conducive to the career development of women's leadership. Diverse and inappropriate leadership styles make a female leader less effective when appointed to a leadership position. Furthermore, when the organizational climate of the university is not supportive and positive toward women leaders' development, it demotivates them from assuming leadership. As a result, the type of organizational climate deemed appropriate is required.The goal of this study is (i) to investigate the dimensions of organisational climate among women academic leaders & (ii) to examine the link between organisational climate and transformational leadership. This study used a mixed method, which is a sequential exploratory design involving six informants from top management and 365 respondents from middle management in 20 public universities. Atlas Ti version 23 and SEM PLS version 4 are being used to analyze data. The findings of the study reveal that the organizational climate is perceived as supportive and constructive by women in academic careers. The thematic analysis also listed 12 themes and dimensions for the organizational climate construct. The research findings also found that the organizational climate and transformational leadership are positively correlated. This research also listed several initiatives that need to be taken by university management to improve the organizational climate and empower women's leadership, especially involving women academic leaders. This research also fulfills the SDG5 agenda regarding women in leadership and decision-making at the top management level.

Keywords: *Organizational Climate; SDG5; Women Leadership; Women Empowerment*

INTRODUCTION

Malaysia is a developing country and has the best public universities in the Asian region.Public higher education institutions are in a unique position to address the teaching and learning of diversity by promoting an atmosphere that will promote healthy interactions between faculty members and students who come from various racial and ethnic origins, as well as gender diversity. Attention must be given to identifying and developing qualified and prepared leaders, given the predicted large movement in leadership at colleges and universities in the upcoming years. Despite numerous research studies showing women's strength as creative, effective, and successful leaders, impediments to their advancement still exist. As a result, there are significantly fewer women in leadership roles than there should be.In Malaysia, women leaders remain a minority and are still underrepresented (Chee Lean Imm et.al,2020). As of June 2023, only two women leaders had been appointed as women vice-chancellors in Malaysia: Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) and Universiti Teknikal Melaka (UTEM). Furthermore, understanding stimulating conditions is crucial since leadership aspires to predict advancement. The influence of organizational climate is an overlooked viewpoint. Because women and men have different leadership aspirations and are more sensitive to the interpersonal and group dynamics of a cooperative climate a cooperative environment might inspire people to consider making a contribution to the team through leadership. Besides that, the main issues we identify are the fact that diversity climate is typically treated as unidimensional, whereas diversity research suggests that there are two major perspectives that could be reflected in diversity climate: efforts to ensure equal opportunity and the absence of discrimination versus efforts to create synergy from

diversity.

According to Fritz and Knippenberg (2017) the interpersonal aspect of a cooperative environment has a greater influence on women's aspirations towards leadership. As a result, in order to address research gaps, this study is being undertaken to investigate and examine whether the organizational climate observed at the public institution is beneficial or not to the development of women leaders in the Malaysian higher education context.

Public HEIs in Malaysia had various types of climates depending on the category of universities. According to the Ministry of Higher Education (KPT, 2023), there is 20 public universities, which are categorized into three main groups.

Table 1. Categories of Public Higher Education Institutions in Malaysia

No	Name of University	Category	Women VC's (2023)
1	*Universiti Malaya	Research	
2	*Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia		
3	*Universiti Teknologi Malaysia		
4	*Universiti Sains Malaysia		
5	*Universiti Putra Malaysia		
6	*Universiti Teknologi MARA	Comprehensive	Prof Datuk Dr Roziah Janor
7	*Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Malaysia		
8	*Universiti Malaysia Sabah		
9	*Universiti Malaysia Sarawak		
10	*Universiti Utara Malaysia	Focused	
11	*Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris		
12	*Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia		
13	*Universiti Teknikal Malaysia Melaka		Prof Ts Dr Massila Kamalrudin
14	*Universiti Malaysia Perlis		
15	*Universiti Malaysia Terengganu		
16	*Universiti Malaysia Pahang		
17	*Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia		
18	*Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin		
19	*Universiti Malaysia Kelantan		
20	*Universiti Pertahanan Nasional Malaysia		

Sources: Ministry of Higher Education Website, 2023

Research Objectives and Questions

The primary goal of this current research is (i) to explore the dimensions of organizational climate perceived among women academic leaders in public university settings and (ii) to examine the link between organizational climate and transformational leadership. This study is being conducted to answer the following research question: (i) What are the organizational climate dimensions perceived by women academic leaders in public universities? Is there a link between organizational climate and transformational leadership? Therefore, testing organizational climate has become an increasingly interesting issue for researchers. Testing organizational environment is thus a topic that researchers are becoming more interested in.Culture is a reflection of the principles of the company, while climate is what members of the organization experience. Organizational and psychological processes influence the atmosphere, which in turn has an impact on overall effectiveness and positive outcomes of the organization (Burke & Litwin, 1992;Schneider et al.,1996).Additionally, Giri & Kumar (2007) reported that productivity and job satisfaction had

been significantly affected by the organizational climate. A positive and supportive organizational climate will give confidence to the staff to carry out the tasks and jobs they are responsible for, especially women.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Organizational Climate

Organizations, including universities, there are greater difficulties than before in the twenty-first century. These problems affect every organization, regardless of their size or framework, and are not particular to any particular organization or sector. The quantity of change that affects the current organization poses a continuing challenge to the organizational climate. If these changes are not properly managed by the organization, they may alter how people behave and view the organization, which may lower motivation, increase employee dissatisfaction, increase turnover, and increase absenteeism, all of which would lower organizational performance. Organizational climate has a long history in organizational behavior, industrial, and organizational psychology. According to a study by Lewin, Lippitt, and White, climate has a greater impact on people than previously ingrained behavioral tendencies and has the power to alter the behavior patterns of organization members & and leaders will be able to grasp what motivates employees to perform in a way that creates a favorable climate and results in organizational success (Litwin & Stringer, 1968). Litwin & Stringer supported the notion that climate includes organizational factors and individual responses by concentrating on the effects of organizational climate (Denison.1996). Subarto et.al (2021) stated that leadership style, work environment, and organizational climate all have an impact on job satisfaction. In other words, the concept of organizational climate is significant in academic institutions because it affects both staffs, particularly early career researchers, and students (Viđak et.al,2023).

Gender diversity climate for inclusion

The core concept of inclusive and diversity climate measures is the idea that individual differences should be recognized, acknowledged, and accepted within businesses. According to Park et al. (2022), efforts to improve the climate for diversity must center on how organizations may support numerous staff members and how they can offer employees equal opportunity regardless of their differences. The study by Kim (2022) intends to address the issue of promoting female participation through investigations into the effectiveness of female leadership in Japan, particularly its impact on gender inclusion and diversity. The results make clear the role of female leadership and the psychological mechanism by which female leadership influences workers' positive work attitudes when female ambidextrous leadership helps to create and strengthen a climate that values gender diversity and inclusion and ultimately raises workers' expectations for their jobs. Higher education institutions should take the initiative and set an example for the future generation by modeling diversity of thought and experience. Colleges and universities cannot afford to disregard the advantages of fostering cultures that are more welcoming to gender and racial diversity in today's competitive market when higher education is criticized for being expensive and complacent (Supiano, 2014; Laursen, 2014).In other research, Gangone & Lennon (2014) state that an important recommendation that emerged and became the focal point is that a performance-based, inclusive climate is essential for women to rise to leadership positions and for an institution to be successful. However, the finding by McCarry et.al (2021)found that for women in academia, parity of entry has not translated into parity of experience, with women having to traverse the paradox of the academy as an outwardly inviting yet hostile environment. Besides, there is a study discovered a significant between gender and work type disparities in organizational climate perception by Lisa A.Campbell et.al (2021)

Hypothesis: Specifically, there is one hypothesis, H1, to be tested: will there be a favorable 'positive' correlation between the organizational climate and transformational leadership?

RESEARCH METHOD
Method of Research

This study, using the sequential exploratory design approach (SED) investigates a topic before validating it, enabling the qualitative approach's increased versatility in uncovering innovative ideas (Edmonds & Kennedy, 2017). The first phase is conducted on a small sample size, even though saturation would be reached, so the development of a new measurement instrument will be vital. The type of information generated by the first phase is uncertain, including whether it will emerge in a deterministic or non-parametric framework. Because the context of top women's leadership is unknown of the effects of the HEI climate, this is being carried out to handle the complexity of the ensuing model characteristics.

Population and Samples

An efficient technique of estimating sample size is needed because empirical research increasingly requires a representative statistical sample. The sample size is based on a table created by Krejcie & Morgan (1970) that makes it simple to determine the sample size for a certain population. In the qualitative part, the sample is chosen from the population of top women leaders holding vice-chancellor and deputy vice-chancellor positions in 20 public universities. Because the top management is less than 30% and limited, only six informants were interviewed and volunteered to be part of this study. In the quantitative part, the study included 365 women academic leaders at the middle management level in 20 public universities. The profile of the informants and respondents as per Table 2. The profile of research informants /respondents.

Table 2. The Profile of Research Informants/Respondents

Phase	Academic Leadership Positions	Qualification	Age	Status
Qualitative	Vice Chancellor (n=2)	PhD (n=6,100%)	45-60	
	Deputy VCs (n=4)		50-60	
Quantitative	Head department/ units(18.4%, n = 67)	PhD(n=323,88.5%)		Married (> 85%)
	Dean (7.4%, n = 27)	Master (n=42,11.5%)	30 -58	
	Head of Center (14.8%, n = 54)			
	Director (14.5%,n=53)			
	Deputy Dean (15.6%,n=57)			

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Diagram 1 shows the thematic analysis of organizational climate themes and dimensions among women academic leaders at the top management level. All the informants agree that the organizational climate is perceived as supportive and constructive toward women's academic careers and leadership. The national policy regarding 30% women's leadership in decision-making should be seriously imposed in universities to make sure the opportunity is being given to women academics to excel in leadership and penetrate the top management level in universities. According to the informant/respondent profile, more than 85% are married, and the themes of safety and work-life balance, support diversity, and opportunity of development for women academic leaders are important to the resilience of women as leaders.
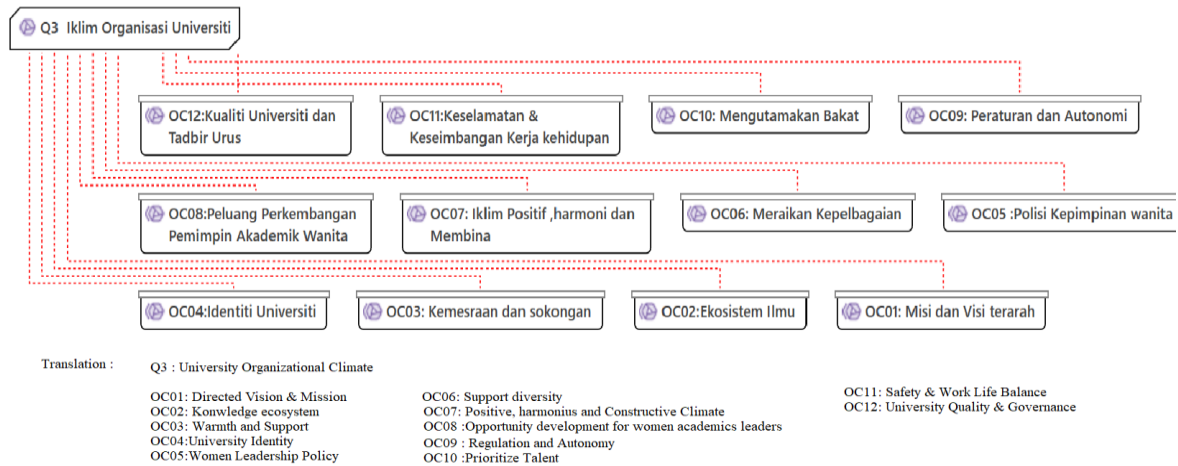
Diagram 1. The thematic analysis of themes and dimensions of organizational climate among women academic leaders (Vice Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor) in public universities using Atlas Ti V.23

The analysis also shows that hypothesis H1 transformational leadership also has a significant and positive relationship with the organisational climate (B= 0.588, t = 12.095, p.01), and this is also supported by the 95% confidence interval analysis, where the zero value is not included in either type of 95% confidence interval (0.517, 0.664). The results are described in Table 3.

Table 3. Analysis Results

Relationship	Beta	t-statistic[a]	Value-p	95% Confidence Interval Bootstrapping	
				Below	Upper
KT→IO	0.588	5.713**	<0.01	0.517	0.664

Note: KT = Transformational Leadership; IO = Organizational Climate; Beta = Correlation coefficient; [a]The value of the relationship coefficient is significant at the 95% confidence interval level (*) if the t-statistic value > 1.96 (p < .05) and the value of the relationship coefficient is significant at the 99% confidence interval level (**) if the t-statistic value > 2.58 (p<.01).

Therefore, it can be concluded that if the value of transformational leadership is high, it will increase the value of the organizational climate. Furthermore, the organizational climate required women academic leaders to practice transformational leadership during their term as academic leaders in universities. The originality of this study provides a deeper understanding of the university's top management in order to focus more on women by providing the needs of an inclusive ecosystem, and the views of those at the top management level have also been proven and generalized in a larger group. This study is also local in character, focusing on Malaysia, which has three sorts of universities: research, comprehensive, and focused, each with its own organizational climate.

CONCLUSIONS

This research finding explored the nexus between organizational climate and transformational leadership among women academic leaders in Malaysia's public universities. Results supported the hypothesis that organizational climate has a significant and positive relationship with transformational leadership. Women as academic leaders play critical roles in creating and ensuring the organizational climate in universities, which has a positive impact on the

growth of academic careers and leadership. The outcome showed women academic leaders fully understood and perceived the climate as supportive and constructive, even though they faced difficulty reaching the top management level in the universities. The 12 themes and dimensions explored regarding the organizational climate give this research interesting theory and practical implications too. This is aligned with previous research suggesting the organization and fostering the growth of group members were highlighted in the women's evaluations of their leadership triumphs on the outside (Haber, 2013, Lisa A.Campbell et.al, 2022).

This study is encouraging university management and the vice chancellor to use OC instruments to explore further their women's career development and leadership track support. In conclusion, these findings prove that the organizational climate is important, a psychometrically sound instrument, and applicable for university leaders in assessing the perceived climate towards gender diversity and women's empowerment.

LIMITATION & FURTHER RESEARCH

Despite these research findings, which give new theoretical and practical assumptions, there are a few limitations to this research that will be of significance to future research. Firstly, since this research is more focused on 20 public universities, this finding cannot be generalized to other education industries, such as private universities, polytechnics, and community colleges. Secondly, this study only examined the group of women academic leaders in top management who were appointed between 2018 - 2022. The appointment of the vice chancellor and deputy vice-chancellor is a crucial process when the political situation is unstable, and the government changes frequently. So, the informant's views can't be generalized to other industries.

A few points should be addressed in order to aid future researchers in taking this into account when undertaking studies in this field. The sequential exploratory study design makes it impossible to determine the causal association between perceived organizational climate and transformational leadership. Therefore, it is suggested that future researchers validate organizational climate (OC) by examining the validity of this scale using other types of validity, such as testing its relationship with alternate established scales that measure effective women's leadership with consideration of a longitudinal study. In addition, the future researcher may also want to explore family roles as a motivation source for women academic leaders in higher education to motivate them to hold leadership posts. A quantitative study may provide deeper insight for women academic leaders and other researchers in this area.

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