The Influence of Leadership and Work Morale on Work Performance of Academic Support Staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University, Thailand

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ABSTRACT

Organization concentrates on enhancing staff performance through human resource development in order to achieve its goals. Effective leader provides appropriate work support and morale to retain staffs and increase work performance in the long run. Most universities in Thailand including Rajabhat Universities have realized the importance of work morale and explore such relationship. This research study aimed to investigate the influence of leadership and work morale on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand. The research study was a quantitative research method. The population of this research study was academic support staffs with the samples of 349 respondents determined by using proportional random sampling based on Krejcie & Morgan formula. Data were collected through 5-point Likert scale questionnaire surveys. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of leadership, work morale and work performance were 0.945, 0.901, and 0.945. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics and inferential statistics including the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis.

The results of this research study showed that staffs' opinion on leadership and work performance were at high levels with mean scores of 3.96 and 4.0, respectively while work morale was at a moderate level with mean score of 3.28. The research results from hypotheses testing found that leadership and work morale factors can predict work performance up to 29.10% (Adjusted R-Square 0.291) at 0.05 significant levels. The leadership had a statistically significant positive influenced on work morale with standardized coefficients (β) of 0.309. The work morale had a statistically significant positive influenced on work performance with standardized coefficients (β) of 0.206. The leadership had a statistically significant positive influenced on work performance with standardized coefficients (β) of 0.542. In conclusion, leadership and work morale had significantly influenced on work performance of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand leading university top leaders focus on providing excellent work support to staffs in order to promote work performance in the long run.

Keywords – Leadership, Work Morale, Work Performance

INTRODUCTION

Background

Human resource is the most significant factor pushing the university to achieve its goals. The continually concentrating on human resource development is a worthwhile investment for Rajabhat universities. Academic support staffs are one of the key human assets to drive the success of the university as these staffs provide routine work to get the job done. To increase work performance of academic support staffs; previous researches stated that leadership is one of the critical factors. The ability of leaders on creating staff work morale is very important process to enhance work performance of academic support staff. It is crucial functions to the success of the university in the long run. It should be strongly applied the appropriate leadership styles in the university in order to contribute to improve work morale of academic support staffs and ultimately increase work performance. Although the influence of leadership on work performance is well explored, a mediating variable of work morale

in the context of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand remains unclear. The importance of the above reasons is the cause of the research.

The objectives of this research study are as follows. (1) To explore the levels of leadership, work morale, and work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand.(2) To investigate the influence of leadership and work morale on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand. (3) To apply the findings of the research study as guidelines in determining appropriate leadership styles in order to increase work morale and work performance of academic support staff for Rajabhat universities in the Thailand. The paper begins with a review of the concepts related to leadership and work morale affecting on work performance in order to conceptualize the framework and test the hypotheses. Next, the research methodology, analysis of data and results of the study are presented. Finally, conclusion and discussion of the research findings as well as managerial implications and recommendations for future research are suggested.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership

The review of the literatures explained leadership as a concept in the field of management and organization. Yukl, G. A. [1] defined leadership as a process in which intentional influence is exerted by one person over the others in order to guide direction, facilitate organizational activities and manage relationships. Leadership can be described as the process of using non-coercive influence to drive the activities of the members in an organized group toward the accomplishment of the targeted objectives. Furthermore, leadership can be defined as the set of qualities or characteristics of the leader attributed to those who perceived to successfully employing such influence. Avolio, B. J. & Bass, B. M. [2] characterized the transactional leader as one who operates within the existing system or culture, preference for risk avoidance, pays attention to time constraints and efficiency, and generally prefers process to substance as a means for maintaining control. Burns, J. M. [3] stated that "Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers". In addition, House, R.J. [4] established Path-Goal theory of leadership based on leadership style and behavior that best fits the employee and work environment in order to achieve organizational goals. As different leaders must be express their behavior in different ways, the followers could have impact on such behaviors. Appropriate leadership styles seem to be increase work performance in an organization. This research conceptual framework had applied the leadership based on the concept of House, R.J. [4] in which characterized the styles of the leadership as directive leadership, supportive leadership, participative leadership, and achievement-oriented leadership. In addition, as various research studies such as Ngambi, H.C. [5] have empirically explored the relationships among leadership, work morale, and work performance; consequently, this research study aimed to investigate such relationships.

Work Morale

Many research studies have defined the meanings of morale and documented in the literature reviews. Haddock, P. [6] stated that morale is an abstract concept that refers to how positive a group perceives toward the organization to which it commits in the leadership and organizational success. In addition, Seroka, J.[7] defined employee morale as the general level of confidence experienced by a group of people affected by discipline and willingness. These definitions of work morale present the significant of morale in an organization; especially in the university, and its relevance to the organizational environment and leadership. Ewton, Z. [8] revealed that employee morale is associated with job absenteeism and brought about job dissatisfaction. Low work morale can be costly to an organization due to low productivity or bad performance. The conceptual framework of this research study was applied the dimensions of work morale based on job consistency, job satisfaction and supervision, and job assignment and mobility as well as the researcher's own context on Rajabhat university in Thailand. As many previous research studies revealed that there were the relationships among leadership, work morale, and work performance developed by Ngambi, H.C. [5] and Neely, G. [9]; consequently, this study aimed

to investigate such relationships.

Work Performance

Work performance is an important concept in the study of organization. The definition of organizational work performance defines as the organization's ability to adapt itself to and exchange solutions for solving the problems toward an organization survival. The effectiveness of work performance is very significant topic. It is increasingly identify that organization develops evaluation system to achieve work performance effectiveness. The high-quality work performance measurement and excellent feedback system that can actually motivate employee effort and improve future work performance will become truly valuable according to Tim, C. M. and R. Cameron, C. [10].Work performance effectiveness is the extent to which planned objectives are achieved as results of employee efforts intended to achieve the desired goals as stated by Rhodes, J.*et al*. [11]. The conceptual model of this research was applied work performance measurement developed by Peterson, E. and Plowman, G.E. [12], in which characterized by four components consists of work quality, work quantity, time management, and operational cost aspects. As many researchers investigated a model for the relationship among leadership, work morale and work performance and found strong relationships among such variables such as Ngambi, H.C. [5] and Rhodes, J. *et al*. [11]; more investigation in the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand should be further explored. To conclude, from the literature reviews cited above, it can be seen that there are some relationships among these three variables to further investigate and conceptualize in the conceptual framework with hypotheses development.
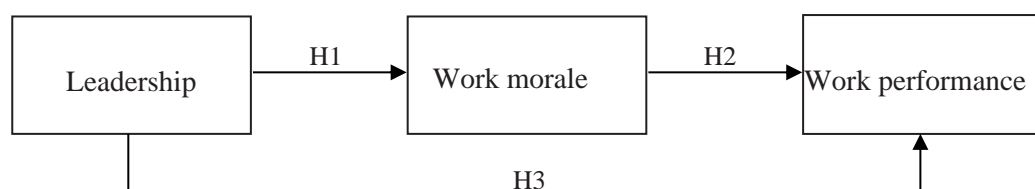
CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

From the literature reviews, the conceptual framework of this research study was conceptualized in Figure 1. It depicts the influence of leadership and work morale on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand. The conceptual framework has been tested on the basis of the bodies of literature including leadership, work morale and work performance, cited above, as well as the researcher's own context about the relationship among variables. Base on the reviews of the literature of the constructs with the conceptualization of the relationships among variables, the hypotheses suggested by the conceptual framework can be described as follows:

H_1: Leadership had a significantly positive influenced on work morale of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand.
H_2: Work morale had a significantly positive influenced on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand.
H_3: Leadership had a significantly positive influenced on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand.

Figure1
Research Conceptual Framework

The research hypotheses can be presented in the forms of structural equations in order to describe the relationship among variables and predict the dependent variable for hypotheses testing. The symbols used to represent the variables stated as follows:

LDS   =   Leadership
WMR   =   Work Morale
WPM   =   Work Performance

The structural equation can be explained as follows:

WMR   = β_1 LDS   ....
(1)
WPM   = β_2 WMR   ....
(2)
WPM   = β_3 LDS   ....
(3)

This research study aimed to explore the influence of leadership and work morale on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand. The research study was a quantitative research method. The population of this research study was 2,347academic support staffs. The samples of 349 respondents were determined by using proportional random sampling based on Krejcie & Morgan formula [13]. Data were collected through 5-point Likert scale questionnaire surveys. This research study was cross-sectional as the data were collected at a single point of time from the key respondents. Content validity was applied to ensure the accuracy of an assessment tool. Cronbach's alpha was conducted to test for reliability with cronbach's alpha coefficient of leadership, work morale, and work performance of 0.945, 0.901, and 0.945, respectively as shown in Table 1. The cronbach's alpha value of the scale of all variables is greater than 0.700, so it shows that the scale has very good reliability. Data were analyzed by descriptive statistics including frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation; and inferential statistics including the Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation and Multiple Regression Analysis. The research results can be significantly analyzed with 95% confidence interval.

Table 1
Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient of Variables

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Leadership	0.945
Work Morale	0.901
Work Performance	0.945

RESULTS

The research results were analyzed by using the statistical package for social science. The research results and the hypotheses testing in this research study were presented as follows.

For description of the respondents, the research finding revealed that the survey data of the academic support staffs of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand were made up of 59.90% female. The averages ages of the academic support staffs were at 35 years old. For the education, most academic support staffs had earned Bachelor's Degree of 65.90%. They were in the position of general officer up to 67.60% with 8 years in work. The average monthly income is at 19,300 Baht as stated in Table2.

For descriptive statistics, the collected data were analyzed by using means and standard deviation. The means score of academic support staffs' opinion on leadership and work performance of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand were at the high levels; mean scores of 3.96 and 4.06,

respectively while work morale was at the moderate level with mean scores of 3.28. To explain in details; directive leadership, supportive leadership, participative leadership, and Achievement-oriented leadership mean scores were at 4.00, 3.97, 3.96, and 3.91, respectively.

For inferential statistics, the analysis of the correlation coefficient between the two independent variables was explored. Pearson's Product-Moment Correlation was used to determine the relationship of the independent variables. The objective was to find the magnitude of correlation among the variables and to test for Multicollinearity. Thus, correlation analysis between the independent variables was shown in Table 3.

Table 2
Description of the Respondents

n = 349

Demographic Information		Numbers of Respondents (NR)	Percentage of NR to Number of TR*
Gender	Male	140	40.10%
	Female	209	59.90 %
Age	Average Age	35 Years	
Education	Below Bachelor's Degree	34	9.70 %
	Bachelor's Degree	230	65.90 %
	Above Bachelor's Degree	85	24.40 %
Position	Manager	5	1.40 %
	Professional Officer	66	18.90 %
	Specialized Officer	42	12.00 %
	General Officer	236	67.60 %
Years in Work	Average Years in Work	8 Years	
Monthly Income	Average Monthly Income	19,300 Baht	

* TR denotes total respondents.

Table 3
Correlation Analysis between Independent Variables

	LDS	WMR	WPM
MEAN	3.96	3.28	4.06
S.D.	0.643	0.665	0.527
LDS	1		
WMR	0.309**	1	
WPM	0.542**	0.206**	1

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

Table 3 showed the relationship between the independent variables that correlation coefficients (r) are not exceed 0.800. As Hair *et al*. [14] described the relationship between the variables that must be less than 0.800 otherwise it may cause Multicollinearity. This research shown that the relationship between the independent variables with the highest value of 0.542, which was not exceed 0.800, accordingly multi-collinearity problem was not found. Therefore, it can be tested by using Multiple Regression Analysis, a linear model, in order to investigate the influence of leadership and work morale on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand.

The research results from hypotheses testing on the influence of leadership and work morale on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand
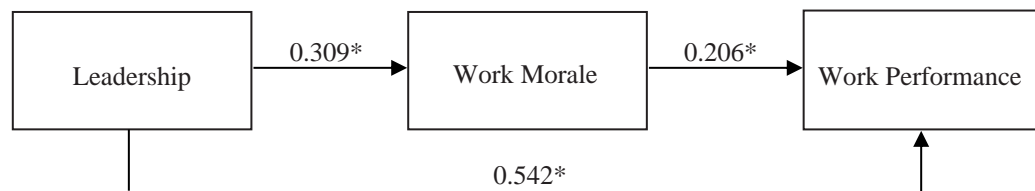
were presented in Table4.

Table 4
Research Results from Hypotheses Testing

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	Beta	Std. Error	Beta		
H_1: LDS→WMR	0.320	0.053	0.309	6.051	0.000***
H_2: WMR→WPM	0.163	0.042	0.206	3.920	0.000***
H_3: LDS→WPM	0.445	0.037	0.542	12.013	0.000***
Adjusted R2 = 29.10%	S.E.E = 0.444			F = 72.521	

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.000 level

In addition, the research results from hypotheses testing can be described in the following diagram as presented in Figure 2 and in the form of structural equations as presented below:

Figure 2

Research Results

$$WMR = 0.309LDS \quad \text{..........} \quad (4)$$
$$(6.051)$$
$$WPM = 0.206WMR \quad \text{..........} \quad (5)$$
$$(3.920)$$
$$WPM = 0.542 \ LDS \quad \text{..........}$$
$$(6)$$
$$(12.013)$$

The hypotheses testing found that leadership and work morale can explain the variation of work performance up to 29.10% (Adjusted R-Square 0.291) at 0.05 significant levels. The leadership had statistically significant direct influenced on work morale with standardized coefficients (β) of 0.309. The work morale had statistically significant direct influenced on work performance with standardized coefficients (β) of 0.206. The leadership had a statistically significant direct influenced on work performance with standardized coefficients (β) of 0.542.The measurement factors of leadership should be further investigated to find the most impact. The symbols used to represent the predictors stated as follows:

LDS1=Directive Leadership
LDS2=Supportive Leadership
LDS3=Participative Leadership

LDS4=Achievement-oriented Leadership
WMR = Work Morale
WPM = Work Performance

The research results of measurement factors shown the statistically significant positive influenced of directive leadership and supportive leadership on work morale with standardized coefficients (β) of 0.241 and 0.183, respectively. Furthermore, directive leadership, participative leadership, and achievement-oriented leadership had statistically significant positive influenced on work performance with standardized coefficients (β) of 0.206, 0.259, and 0.205, respectively as presented in the forms of structural equations below:

$$WMR = 0.241LDS1 + 0.183LDS2 \qquad \text{..........} \quad (7)$$
$$(3.014) \qquad (2.027)$$

$$WPM = 0.206LDS1 + 0.259LDS3 + 0.205LDS4 \qquad \text{.........} \quad (8)$$
$$(2.906) \qquad (3.238) \qquad (3.059)$$

In conclusion, according to hypotheses testing, leadership and work morale had significantly positive influenced on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand suggesting university top leaders focusing on directive leadership and supportive leadership styles to provide excellent work morale to the academic support staffs. In addition, leaders in the university need to concentrate on participative leadership and achievement-oriented leadership styles in order to enhance work performance in the long run.

CONCLUSIONS

This research study aimed to investigate the influence of leadership and work morale on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand. The results presented that leadership and work morale had significantly influenced on work performance of academic support staff. Thus, the following recommendations from the research results can be applied as management guidelines on appropriate leadership styles for Rajabhat universities in Thailand. Firstly, leadership; especially for directive leadership and supportive leadership styles, seems to be key success styles to increase academic support staffs' work morale and keep support staffs continually work for Rajabhat universities in the long run. To raise work morale for academic support staff, clear goal setting and advanced planning should be strengthening. Secondly, participative leadership, achievement-oriented leadership, and directive leadership styles can enhance work performance of academic support staff of Rajabhat universities in the long run. Leaders in the university need to give an opportunity for academic support staffs on express their opinion in the meeting as well as assign challenging job in order to develop academic support staffs performance in the long run.

To conclude, leadership and work morale had significantly positive influenced on work performance of academic support staff of the Upper Northeastern Rajabhat University in Thailand. However, there are many other factors that can be expected to enhance work performance such as work climate, work motivation, or quality of work life for further research.

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