

Internal marketing to improve job satisfaction and organisational performance among lecturers at private universities in Malaysia

Siti Aishah. H^a, Santhi. G^a, Tanusia. A^a

^a School of Management and Marketing, Faculty of Business, Hospitality and Humanities, Nilai University, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia.

*Corresponding author and e-mail: Siti Aishah. H, sitiaishah@nilai.edu.my

Abstract

This research attempts to study the effectiveness of internal marketing (IM) as an effective internal tool for the economic unit to enhance the job satisfaction (JS) and organisational performance (OP) in Malaysia private universities (PU). The primary goal of this study is to build a theoretical model for the construction of a holistic measurement scale that focuses on the direct use of IM in PUs, allowing PUs to achieve strategic goals such as improving lecturers' job satisfaction and contributing to organisational performance. Quantitative method approach in hypotheses testing design is used to identify the significant relationship between IM, JS and OP. The respondents are lecturers from Malaysia private universities. This research's contributing to the existing literature in two ways; firstly, it analyses the relationship between internal marketing, job satisfaction, and organisational performance in a sector where marketing issues are still understudied; private universities and secondly, by offering a theoretical model for internal marketing development in the organisation, with a focus on the PUs. In this setting, one contribution reason for the resilience and performance of PUs are determined by the capability of lecturers to protect their institutions from an intimidating environment and to maintain growth.

Keywords: *Internal marketing; Job satisfaction; Organisational Performance; Private universities.*

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Private universities require a competent and committed academic staff in order to survive and perform well. Educator competence is increasing becoming aware to perform a better education quality in highly driven globalization of education. This research is aligned with the vision of the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education) 10 Shifts; one is to encourage higher learning institutions to pursue various forms of institutional excellence, diversify career channels, and to implement systematic talent development procedures (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

Internal marketing (IM) emphasizes on obtaining and maintaining customer-oriented employees. Employees were chosen from recruitment and selection process in which motivates to achieve customer satisfaction. The impact of IM by using marketing like approach directed towards the relationship between employee-organisation in achieving organisational goals which

linked to job service quality as well as job satisfaction (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Sousa & Coelho, 2013; Azzam, 2016). Satisfied customer can be achieved if the employees are treated as customers (Al-Hawary, 2013; Ali, 2016; Kanyurhi and Akonkwa, 2016; Kukreja, 2017). However, IM as a strategic tool, are found to reduce resistance towards organisational changes it contributed to overall organisational well-being (Ahmed & Rafiq, 2003; Lee et al., 2017).

Job satisfaction has been shown in previous studies to lead positive workplace attitudes, intentions, behaviours, and performance results (Bednarska and Szczyt, 2015), as well as to provide recognition, income, promotion, and fulfilment goals (Azzam, 2016; Kukreja, 2017; Kaliski, 2007; Yildiz, 2016) and to link to all aspects of monetary and non-monetary remuneration (Bailey et al., 2016; Di Paolo, 2016). Previous research has discovered a significant link between job satisfaction and organisational performance (Latif et al., 2013; Platisa et al., 2015; Mahmoud et al., 2018; Sabuhari et al., 2020). According to Cho (2020), one of the goals in HR Management is to increase job satisfaction among the employees of the company. Evidence suggests that job satisfaction is linked to employees' attitude towards their jobs and work situation (Kinicki and Fugate, 2015; Wikaningrum, Udin, and Yuniawan, 2018).

Employee performance is described as "the degree to which employees meet work criteria" (Harwiki, 2016) and "the work quality and quantity attained by an employee in carrying out his activities in accordance with the obligations allocated to him" (Naldi et al., 2007). A summary estimate of the number and quality of task contributions provided by an individual or group to the work unit and organisation is also known as performance. (Martin et al., 2017). Furthermore, "performance is a set of accomplishments that employees can attain in the course of their work, and it is determined by their skill, effort, and employment opportunities, as measured by the output generated by employee job satisfaction" (Gruman and Saks, 2011).

One of the most noteworthy findings of this study is that a holistic internal marketing technique can be a beneficial tool in improving job satisfaction and, as a result, improving organisational performance in Malaysian private universities.

2.0 PROBLEM STATEMENT

The onset of the globalization, wide utilization of information technology and the occurrence of Covid-19 coronavirus has made universities in all around the world facing new challenges. Education plays a vital role in the development of the economy and country as a whole. Education development also depends on the knowledge, skills, and competencies acquired by the nation. The challenged of higher learning institutions, including private universities, to a considerable degree, have an undue influence over the university inputs, operations, functions, processes, and outcomes.

Past research has identified several challenges in higher learning institutions including private universities, namely, knowledge management and sharing as well as research collaboration (Tan and Md. Noor, 2013), transnational virtual delivery (Yung-Chi Hou, Morse, and Wang, 2015), staff turnover (Feng and Angeline, 2010), poor delivery of quality due to having more students to coach (Long et al., 2014) and gender related issues (Baker, 2016). In addition, following challenges had been proposed by Black (2015) on the multirole academic leaders, transitional roles for academician, the need to adapt new circumstances, the need to promote the organisation, issue on diversity, loyalty, university governance and globalization. Study by Manogharan et.al.

(2018) on issues of high staff retentions are due to conflict of roles, inability and difficulties faced in handling international students, lack of priorities by the organisation on their salary, benefit, staff welfare and career growth and lack of ability in retaining academic staff. Recent research trends indicated academic staffs faced mental stress due to being new to online teaching and learning online learning (Huang et al., 2020), having short time to prepare conducting online classes which leads to teaching and learning being compromised (Bernama, 2020a). In addition, with assessment having marked online, it leads to computer vision syndrome (Forster, 2020), low internet connections (Albukhary International University, 2020).

Based from literatures, the following are more issues concerning higher learning institutions in Malaysia, particularly private universities:

1. Malaysian academics are struggling to meet the increasingly demanding requirements for quality teaching, research, publication, service, and administration, within a highly bureaucratic system, with comparatively limited support in terms of funding, equipment, and human resources. Increased expectations of academic performance, accountability and the new governance system raise questions about how these growing pressures affect Malaysian academics' work experiences and attitudes. Evidently, academic work and the profession face an onslaught of pressures that touch its core (Azman, 2019).
2. A major issue for universities in Malaysia is not only ensuring the recruitment of adequate numbers of talent into the academic profession, but also sustaining the continued excellence of their academics (Azman & Pang, 2016).
3. In terms of academics, competition has created obstacles for Malaysian Private HLIs in hiring and retaining quality academics, as more attractive remuneration packages in terms of salary and benefits are offered by the private HLIs (Anis & Abdullah, 2018).
4. Specifically, private universities in Malaysia need to re-examine their strategic plans of which one includes career development of their human resources particularly academics (Arokiasamy et al., 2011).
5. Malaysian government has often expressed its concern about the high turnover of academics in higher education institutions in Malaysia, primarily from private universities. It is still proven till now the issues still arise (Morris et al., 2004).

By referring to those issues, it is clear that academician faced a lot of challenges significantly. It is vital for organisation in valuing their academic staffs and ensure staffs possess skills to achieve high level of satisfaction on career development and productivity. An employee who has positive attitude towards his or her job will have job satisfaction and willingness to commit to the organisation, thus increasing organisational performance (Pang & Lu, 2018; Wu *et al.*, 2013) Thus, this research is to provide a better picture on the issues pertinent to lecturers, particularly in private universities.

Marketing is no longer the purview of a single division. Marketing necessitates interdepartmental harmony, which can only be achieved when customers and the company's marketing attitude and philosophy toward serving the organization's customers are clearly understood (Keller and Kotler, 2015). Internal marketing, which entails hiring, training, and encouraging workers that desire to provide excellent customer service and advertise efficiently, is included in holistic marketing. Internal marketing that is done well helps to ensure that external marketing is done correctly, ensuring that marketing initiatives meet, if not exceed, customer expectations (Keller and Kotler, 2015). Internal marketing is seen to incorporate employees' commitment to the organisation and to determine employees' job satisfaction (Stoffers and Heijden, 2009; Abzari et al., 2011;

Kanyurhi and Akonkwa, 2015). Furthermore, internal marketing could be a vital management tool that results in motivated employees providing high-quality services, ultimately affecting customer satisfaction and organisational performance (Papasolomou and Vrontis, 2006; Tsai and Wu, 2011; Narteh and Odoom, 2015; Kanyurhi and Bugandwa, 2016; Kaurav et al., 2016; Mainardes et al., 2018). Internal marketing strategies are critical for PUs, as well as other service organisations, because one of the most important benefits of internal marketing is that it improves employee satisfaction (Mir Nimer and Musadiq, 2013). Internal marketing techniques that are effective can be a valuable tool for generating highly committed and satisfied employees, which is essential for strengthening customer relationships and achieving higher customer satisfaction, loyalty, and long-term profits. The implementation of an IM strategy will enable businesses to achieve unparalleled levels of excellence and competitive advantage (Caldwell et al., 2015). Therefore, internal marketing can be a foundation of competitive advantage (Ahmed et al., 2003) for service firms including private universities.

Few empirical studies have been conducted on internal marketing and its contribution to the lack of models demonstrating the significance of internal marketing among service firms (Bouranta and Mavridoglou, 2005). While in this research the concentration is given to Malaysia PUs. Internal marketing takes precedence over traditional external marketing (Kotler, 2000; Hwang and Chi, 2005). Internal marketing, according to Greene et al. (1994), is the cornerstone to outstanding service and successful external marketing (Hwang and Chi, 2005). Internal marketing is becoming more widely recognised as a strategy for institutionalising a company's vision, growth, and rewards (Foreman and Money, 1995). To keep their present customers and increase customer loyalty, service firms rely on relationship and positive word of mouth (Mohsin and Hafiz, 2017). Referring to Zeithaml et al. (1998), organisations should relate employees' rewards to service quality in order to motivate staff to work hard to give exceptional service to their clients. Furthermore, one internal marketing technique is to implement a rewards system that is closely linked to the employee (service provider) and the quality of service provided to clients. (Pantouvakis, 2012; Mohsin and Hafiz, 2017).

This study claimed that using an IM strategy would result in more satisfied customer-contact staff, which would lead to increased customer satisfaction, which in this case would be lecturers and students at PUs. While many literatures are useful in assessing what constitutes IM and what does not, as at present there are no specific models that show how IM works (Bohnenberger et al., 2019). Therefore, this research proposes IM model to show the interrelationships between the criteria for IM and its implementation to enhance job satisfaction and organisational performance, particularly in Malaysia private universities. This study proposes an IM model that includes three separate yet closely intertwined strands of theoretical development of the IM conceptualization, namely (1) employee job satisfaction phase (Huang & Rundle-Thiele, 2019; Bailey et al., 2016; Kanyurhi & Akonkwa, 2016; Muhammad Shahzad et al., 2013; Rafiq and Ahmed, 2000), (2) the IM practices phase (Bohnenberger et al., 2019; Huang & Rundle-Thiele, 2019; Huang and Rundle-Thiele, 2015), and (3) performance of the organisations phase (Alvarez-Gonzalez et al., 2017; Mohsin & Hafiz, 2017; Kanyurhi & Akonkwa, 2016; Norizan et al., 2002). This study makes a unique contribution by developing and validating an internal marketing model that will be empirically evaluated in Malaysian private institutions using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) methodologies.

Employees who are motivated are a company's most valuable asset. Employee work satisfaction is extremely important in the subject of human resource management, and various research studies

have been undertaken on this topic (Judge et al., 2020; Bakotic, 2016; Raziq & Maulabakhsh; 2015). It is believed that employee job satisfaction affects their performance and total organisational productivity, based on the findings of previous literatures (Haider et al., 2015; Shipley, 2015). Most studies on job satisfaction over the years have focused on organisational and industrial settings (Platsidou & Diamantopoulou, 2009). Job satisfaction is normally studied both in primary and secondary education (Salman et al., 2012). However, empirical evidence about Pus lecturers' job satisfaction is scarce in the worldwide literature (Oshagbemi, 2003). In Malaysia, job satisfaction research has been conducted in a variety of industries, including automotive (Dawal and Taha, 2006), financial institutions (Lew and Liew, 2006), small and medium enterprises (Lo et al., 2013), retail (Rohani et al., 2012), and tourism (Yew, 2008). The main goal of this research is to look into the factors that influence job satisfaction in Malaysian public universities. Based on the review from Malaysian literature, there are only a few papers available to researchers that are interested in this topic. Furthermore, the fact that the number of public and private higher learning institutions has expanded worldwide has raised the intensity of rivalry for quality personnel and quality-demanding and quality-producing students within higher education. It has been proved in industry that satisfied employees provide better service because they are better able to comprehend their consumers, and in the case of PUs, their customers are their hard-won and quality-demanding students.

Table 1. Elements of IM Model

Phase	Elements of IM
Phase 1 – Antecedents	Employee job satisfaction (extrinsic and intrinsic rewards)
Phase 2 – Tools and Practices	IM practices (i.e. development, adaption to work, internal & external communication)
Phase 3 – Results	Performance of the organisations

Employees' intrinsic and extrinsic rewards are particularly significant in increasing their job effort. Many studies have found that the rewards system has a significant impact on staff productivity. However, no explicit benefits are mentioned for increasing organisational productivity (Ajmal et al., 2015). Extrinsic and intrinsic rewards are defined in this study. The importance of both forms of rewards varies depending on the need and situation. Employees receive intrinsic rewards (psychological rewards) for doing meaningful work and doing it successfully. Recognition, progress, professional growth, authority over immediate task, respect, and responsibility are all fundamental components of job satisfaction that are based on human perception and internal feelings (Ajmal et al., 2015; Negussie & Demissie, 2013). Employee empowerment has a considerable impact on employee self-efficiency, which improves employee intrinsic satisfaction, according to Negussie & Demissie (2013), who performed research among nurses. Extrinsic rewards, often known as monetary rewards, are tangible rewards given to employees in the form of external job-related factors such as salary, raises, bonuses, and benefits (Negussie & Demissie, 2013). Employee satisfaction and work satisfaction are greatly influenced by both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards (Ajmal et al., 2015). Recognize the repercussions of high employee satisfaction and clarify what it means for employees to be sincerer towards the company and how sincere efforts improve the company's overall performance over time.

Organisational performance is a metric that measures how well a company fulfils its goals (Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1986; Hamon, 2003; Li-An, 2008). Furthermore, performance refers to the quality and amount of work completed by an individual or a group (Schermerhorn et al., 2002; Li-An, 2008). Management should devise, design, and implement a compensation

strategy to help the organisation achieve its overall goals and improve its performance, with the goal of obtaining the most productive and supporting effects from its employees through increased employee satisfaction (Muhammad et al., 2013). Both management and pleased employees should be made aware of the compensation strategy's objectives so that inadvertent and subjective motives can be minimised while attempting to strategically improve the common goal. Without a doubt, this will allow for better organisational performance.

The goal of this research is to develop a model for examining the relationship between internal marketing, job satisfaction, and organisational performance. The research participants are lecturers from Malaysia private universities.

3.0 RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this research is to see how efficient internal marketing is at improving work satisfaction and organisational performance in Malaysian private universities. Based on the above argument, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. Does extrinsic rewards have any significant relations on the job satisfaction among lecturers in private universities.
2. Does intrinsic rewards have any significant relations on the job satisfaction among lecturers in private universities.
3. Does internal marketing have any significant relations on the job satisfaction in private universities.
4. Does job satisfaction have any significant relationship on the organisational performance in private universities.
5. Does internal marketing moderate the relations between job satisfaction (extrinsic rewards and intrinsic rewards) and organisational performance.

In line with the above research topics, the current study aims to achieve the following precise objectives:

1. To investigate the relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic rewards and job satisfaction among private university lecturers.
2. To analyse the relationship between internal marketing and job satisfaction among private university lecturers.
3. To investigate the link between employee satisfaction and company performance in private institutions.
4. Examine the role of internal marketing in moderating the link between work satisfaction (extrinsic and intrinsic rewards) and organisational success.

4.0 RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The primary research model in this study is exhibited in Fig. 1.

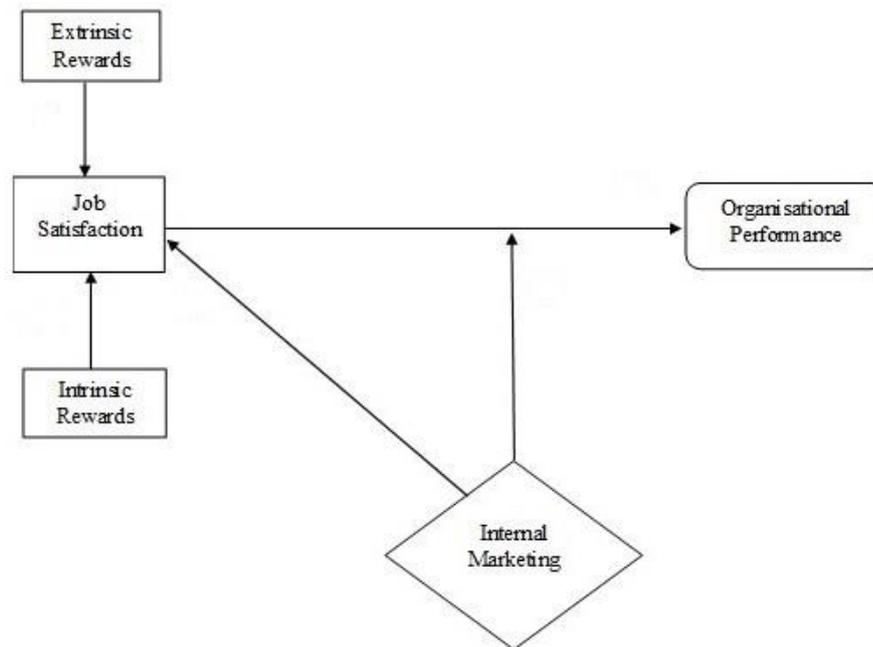


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Based on the conceptual framework presented above, the hypotheses are constructed as follows to meet the research objectives.

- H1. Extrinsic rewards significantly influence the job satisfaction among lecturers in private universities.
- H2. Intrinsic rewards significantly influence the job satisfaction among lecturers in private universities.
- H3. Internal marketing significantly influences job satisfaction in private universities.
- H4. Job satisfaction significantly influences organisational performance in private universities.
- H5. Internal marketing moderates the relations between job satisfaction (extrinsic rewards and intrinsic rewards) and organisational performance.

4.1 Internal Marketing

Internal marketing was once thought to be linked to the creation of high-quality services (Berry, Hensen and Burke, 1976). Internal marketing is critical for making internal products (jobs) available that meet the needs of a dynamic internal market (workers) while also achieving the organization's objectives (Berry et al., 1976; Bohnenberger et al., 2019). Internal marketing, according to Lings and Brooks (1998), is a method in which all sections of a company act as suppliers and customers at the same time. This encompasses everything from the marketing department, which identifies consumer demands, to the service department, which resolves product or service issues. Furthermore, according to Conduit and Mavondo (2001), employees should acquire the highest quality products from their predecessors in the internal supply chain so that they can deliver the highest quality to their successors. Internal marketing is tied to management's notion that employees should be seen as internal customers and strategic resources. This by means, employees are looking for their satisfaction through different management practices to achieve greater external customer satisfaction and consequently, higher performance (Bohnenberger et al., 2019). According to Awwad and Agti (2011), the adopting of an effective

internal marketing may help the organisation to achieve the objectives, namely, (1) Activating incentives through which employees are encouraged and motivated to continuously improve performance, (2) Developing the capabilities and competencies of employees in industrial and service economic units, (3) Providing economic units with competent staff to perform administrative functions and communicate with the public, (4) The IM application of the economic unit helps to carry out internal promotion campaigns to encourage employees and activate their role in achieving the strategic objectives, and (5) Maintaining highly skilled workers by providing them with all material and moral requirements (Thabit and Saif, 2020).

4.2 Job Satisfaction

Employees' general favourable attitude about their jobs is measured by job satisfaction (Haiyan et al., 2018) Employment satisfaction is the pleasurable emotional state that results from viewing one's job as accomplishing or helping the accomplishment of one's job values (Locke, 1969; Haiyan et al., 2018). In comparison to dissatisfied employees, studies have shown that satisfied employees are more likely to give superior services to both internal and external consumers. Furthermore, they have a better likelihood of staying with the company for a longer amount of time (Lings, 1999). Low employee satisfaction leads to low-quality service performances by personnel (Bitner, 1990). When employees are happy with their jobs, they are more likely to meet client needs (Sasser and Arbeit, 1976; Berry, 1981; Piercy, 1995; Schneider et al., 1994, 2003). Employee satisfaction is also important for gaining recognition, earning money, getting promoted, and achieving goals that lead to a sense of fulfilment. Mir Nimer and Musadiq, 2013; Kaliski, 2007).

Extrinsic (financial) and intrinsic (psychological) rewards are believed to be related to job satisfaction, according to the equity theory (Adams, 1965) and the discrepancy model (Porter and Lawler, 1968). While financial reward satisfaction relates to job satisfaction for only a subset of employees, the relationship between psychological reward satisfaction and job satisfaction holds for every employee (Hofmans, De Gieter, & Pepermans, 2012).

Job satisfaction, according to Wood (1976), is a prerequisite for an educator's long tenure and performance, as well as overall institutional success (Edward and Teoh, 2009). It is important to pay attention to job satisfaction of the teaching staff, as a high-quality academic staff is essential in developing a successful educational system.

4.3 Organisational Performance

One way to evaluate an organization's efficacy is to look at its performance. The term "performance" is frequently used to define an organization's or policy's success (Sarah and Tricia, 2005). Employee satisfaction, customer satisfaction, market share, gains and outcomes, overall performance, and leadership support are among the factors for an organization's performance (Adlouni, 2002; Marwan, 2012). The three criteria that go into measuring organisational success are financial performance (i.e. earnings per share, return on investment), operational performance (i.e. product quality, market share), and organisational effectiveness (i.e. employee morale, working environment) (Yang et al., 2009; Venkatraman and Ramanujam, 1986; Kelvin and Pang, 2018). Furthermore, a well-thought-out incentive approach that boosts employee job satisfaction has a major impact on company success (Analoui, 1999; Kelvin and Pang, 2018).

As a result, this study develops a holistic internal marketing marketing model that connects the postulated antecedents of job satisfaction – extrinsic and intrinsic rewards (Hofmans et al., 2013)

and internal marketing (Narteh, 2012; Kanyurhi and Bugandwa, 2016) – and the consequent job satisfaction behaviours to organisational performance (Koyuncu et al., 2006; Rayton and Yalabik, 2014). In addition, internal marketing also could control specific links between employee behaviours in Malaysian private universities. (Ahmed et al., 2003; Alegre et al., 2015).

5.0 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The main approach used in this research is the non-experimental quantitative research design with hypotheses testing in nature. This refers to collecting numerical data by means of structured questionnaires or observation guides to gather primary data from people (Hair et.al, 2010). This research collects data from a group of lecturers among Malaysian private universities. Furthermore, quantitative research can analyse the data and determine the quantity and the extent to which certain phenomenon in the form of numbers is statistically accurate and reliable. Specifically, quantitative analysis is used when the primary objectives of the research are to examine if a particular relationship or difference between two or more variables is significant (Zikmund, 2003; Creswell, 2009).

The motive of this research using the quantitative approach drive by the following reasons: (1) to allow the relationship to be determined between the variables using statistical methods. This corresponds with the objective of the present study, which is to examine the connection between internal marketing and job satisfaction among lecturers in private universities, (2) to allows the analysis to be carried out on a large sample, which can be generalized to the entire population; (3) allows use of standard and formal sets of questionnaires (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013); and (4) to generalize the result on the internal marketing holistic model to all private universities in Malaysia in order for this research to solve the problem statement.

5.1 Population & Sampling

The population of this research is consist of lecturers from private universities in Malaysia. The most recent list of higher education institutions will be obtained from Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE). Meanwhile, total number of lecturers will be gathered from the respective private universities that will participate in this research. This research is using systematic random sampling design. Random sampling is the purest form of probability sampling. Each member of the population has an equal chance of being selected. This simple random sampling design has the least bias and offers the most generalizability (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

5.2 Data Collection

Data collection method will be used in this research is survey questionnaire. Questionnaires are to gain a perspective of a large population (Fowler, 2002), in this case, lecturers from Malaysian private universities. For this research, lecturers at private universities will be provided with a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaires will be distributed by email. This is due to most of lectures are quite mobile because of their nature of job by attending classes, training, conferences, consultation, research travel etc. In addition, during the new norm of Covid-19 pandemic; questionnaire distribution via email is deem appropriate. Furthermore, it will help to increase the reachability of questionnaire to target respondents. The following data collection steps will be taken for this research:

1. Permission will be obtained from the unit that has the authority to provide approval for the research. This activity will carry out through phone calls and emails.
2. Obtain list of lecturers and their email address.
3. Distribute questionnaire via electronic (email).
4. Follow-up.
5. Questionnaire collection.
6. Data cleaning.

5.3 Data Collection

Findings of this research is based on the data collected through survey questionnaire from the targeted respondents. It reports the results of respondents' profile, data screening, reliability, the validity of the measurements, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and the model fit using SmartPLS to confirmed the theoretical model. Moreover, the findings also present the path analysis and results of hypotheses testing.

6.0 CONCLUSION

Previous studies use samples from various industries, i.e., banks, hospitality, and restaurant, among others. There are limited studies exploring the relationship between all three concepts in the PUs. Job satisfaction and internal marketing have been acknowledged as critical for organisational survival and growth by academics and practitioners alike. The findings of this study will add to the knowledge and understanding of job satisfaction and internal marketing in the context of services, especially in the PUs. Due to a dearth of study on the relationship between internal marketing, job satisfaction, and organisational success, there is a knowledge gap. As a vehicle for organisational success, this study may help to a greater awareness of the need for stronger internal marketing methods among Malaysian PUs. In addition, the study can help private institutions better grasp the role of job satisfaction and internal marketing in increasing organisational performance. As a result, this study will assist PUs in developing successful strategy, particularly in regards to professors. Using data from Malaysian private universities, this study tries to close this gap. As a result, based on the preceding considerations, the study's relevance may be justified.

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