IPPTN - IRPHE Special Series on Learning from the COVID-19 Pandemic

Change Pattern in Academics' Job Performance during COVID-19 Lockdown

1. To study the pattern of change in academics' job performance during the COVID-19 lockdown and its extensions (18th March to 12th May 2020), a study was carried out with the following objectives:
2. To measure the academics' self-perceived job performance at the beginning of the lockdown (the average self-perceived job performance).
3. To measure the average rate of change in self-perceived job performance over 4 months from the beginning of the lockdown until two months after the lockdown.
4. To investigate gender differences in terms of both the average self-perceived job performance and the average rate of change in self-perceived job performance over 4 months under scrutiny.
5. To investigate the relationship between the average self-perceived job performance and the average rate of change in self-perceived job performance over 4 months under scrutiny.

Data on academics' job performance were collected from the academics at three time points namely, at the beginning of the lockdown (April 2020), at the end of the lockdown (June 2020), and two months after the end of the lockdown (August 2020) using a job performance scale developed by Williams and Anderson (1991). This instrument consists of 7 items and respondents were provided with a 5-point Likert scale to rate the items. Therefore, based on this scale, the minimum job performance scale was 7, the average job performance score was 21, and the maximum job performance score was 35.

In total, data were collected from 220 academics. After processing and screening the data (predicting and replacing missing values and identifying extreme multivariate outliers), latent growth curve (LGC) modelling (Bollen & Curran, 2006; Duncan et al., 2006; Grimm et al., 2016) was applied to analyze the data from 212 academics.

The analysis of the data showed that:

- The average self-perceived job performance (T1) was 29.87 (sig and can be generalized to all the Malaysian academics).
- The average rate of change in self-perceived job performance over 4 months was 0.262 (not sig and only applicable to the sampled academics).
- We observed a significant variation in the average self-perceived job performance (6.116) and a nonsignificant variation in its rate of change. However, we did not find gender as a variable explaining the observed significant variation. Therefore, we did not find gender differences in terms of the average self-perceived job performance.
- Although we found evidence for the significant relationship between the average self-perceived job performance and the average rate of change in self-perceived job performance over 4 months, because the variation in the rate of change was not meaningful and statistically significant, we concluded that there is no relationship between the variables of interest.

Given the stressful situation during the lockdown, we expected to see a considerable decline in academics' job performance. However, our results showed that the performance of the academics was well above the average job performance and it was consistent over 4 months. This indicates that generally, the national-level, state-level, and university-level policies implemented during the lockdown to keep the academics healthy and well-performing worked very well.

Nevertheless, the study was not without limitations. We collected data at 3 occasions. Collecting data at more time points (e.g., 4 time points) can provide a better picture of the trend of change over time. Also, more advanced methods (e.g., cohort-sequential growth modelling) can provide more accurate insight since they enable researchers to run the analysis based on large and different sample sizes at each time point. Last, we only considered gender as a time-invariant predictor of the variation in academics' average self-perceived job performance. Thus, investigating the impact of other time-invariant and time-variant predictors is recommended in future research to study patterns of change in academics' job performance during stressful situations (e.g., infectious disease outbreaks).

References
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