

Relationship Between Job Satisfaction and Locus of Control Among College Lecturers: A Quantitative Study in Sabah, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between job satisfaction and locus of control among 60 private college lecturers in Sabah, Malaysia. The Job Satisfaction Survey and Rotter Scale were administered on Google Forms to collect data that were subsequently analyzed using SPSS 26.0. Overall results showed that two dimensions of job satisfaction (job benefits and the job itself) tend to be significantly correlated with locus of control. Descriptive statistics showed that a large number of lecturers tend to experience low job satisfaction. A substantial number of them also tend to exhibit external locus of control. In light of the findings, recommendations were made on how to enhance lecturers' job satisfaction and internal locus of control.

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Contribution/Originality: This research offers a valuable contribution by examining the relationship between job satisfaction and locus of control among college lecturers in Sabah, Malaysia. Besides narrowing the gap that exists in the educational psychology literature, it is the first quantitative study that examines the job satisfaction and locus of control among college lecturers in Sabah, Malaysia. Therefore, it adds to the very limited evidence base on lecturers' job satisfaction and locus of control and reports a novel conceptual framework of factors associated with the two multifaceted psychological constructs.

1. Introduction

Job satisfaction and internal locus of control are two multifaceted psychosocial constructs that have serious ramifications for both organizations and staff because they act as powerful predictors of individual wellbeing, which can affect organizational productivity, job competence, and employee commitment. Job satisfaction and internal locus of control can influence staff's cognitive and affective responses that underlie their organizational commitment and values. Therefore, facilitating staff's job satisfaction and internal locus of control can be a catalyst in improving job motivation and goal-directed behavior. In brief, research on job satisfaction and locus of control can provide a more holistic perspective on how psychosocial factors impact on staff's competence, self-efficacy, job pride, lifelong learning, and other variables associated with career success and personal achievement (Oktaviana, Fatkhurahmana, & Supeno, 2023; Suhelmi, Mahdani, & Kesuma, 2025; Talamala, 2024; Tran & Tran, 2024; Yennita, Irawan, & Eliza, 2025).

Coined by Rotter (1966), locus of control is defined as the degree to which people feel a sense of agency concerning their lives. People with internal locus of control or internality tend to believe that events and things are directly related to their own behavior and attitudes, while those with external locus of control or externality tend to attribute them primarily to luck, destiny, and other extraneous variables that are beyond their control. On the other hand, job satisfaction (Hoppock & Spiegler, 1938) refers to the combination of physiological, psychological, and environmental factors that make people feel satisfied with their occupation. Although it is influenced by many external factors, job satisfaction remains something internal that has to do with the way how staff feel or perceive things.

Previous research revealed that teachers with internality tend to experience greater job satisfaction and less job burnout compared to those with external locus of control. In an earlier study, Bein, Anderson, and Maes (1990) found that teachers' externality of control beliefs tends to be negatively correlated with job satisfaction, implying that teachers with greater sense of internal control appear to be more satisfied with their profession. Similarly, Bedel (2008) discovered that preschool teachers with internal locus of control tend to demonstrate more favorable attitudes toward the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, Basak and Ghosh (2011) revealed that job satisfaction tends to be significantly associated with locus of control and educational environment; besides, job satisfaction was also found to be significantly predicted by the two constructs. Lastly, in their investigation, Hans, Mubeen, and Ghabshi (2014) disclosed that many teachers tend to be primarily motivated by both high job satisfaction and internal locus of control.

1.1. Statement of the Problem

Very little research is available on the relationship between job satisfaction and locus of control among Malaysian lecturers; hence, this study aimed to provide greater insight into the psychosocial characteristics of Malaysian lecturers, particularly those from the Bornean state of Sabah. The primary purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between job satisfaction and locus of control among private college lecturers in Sabah, Malaysia. Lecturers have been tasked with the profound responsibility of implementing new teaching practices to promote student learning. Therefore, it is crucial to examine their job satisfaction and locus of control as these

psychosocial attributes tend to influence their perceptions and attitudes toward the teaching and learning process, which is fundamental in supporting students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. Besides, research on lecturers' job satisfaction and locus of control will contribute to their effectiveness in terms of pedagogy, research, community service, and overall performance in the long run.

Additionally, human resource managers at higher institutions of learning must be aware of the moderating effects of locus of control and job satisfaction on lecturers' organizational commitment to ensure that they are keen to promote the organization's vision and mission, and are therefore willing to go beyond their roles and responsibilities to engage in strategic planning, decision-making, and internal alignment toward a common goal. Moreover, findings on these variables will assist policymakers in recruiting lecturers who have the enthusiasm, commitment, and willingness to expand their discretionary effort to help the organization attain greater heights, while raising the status of the teaching profession. Lastly, findings of this study can guide policymakers in planning strategic interventions and adequate support for lecturers because the latter are the most critical intellectual resources for the long-term development and sustainability of private higher education. Moreover, lecturers' psychosocial attributes can be capitalized to promote higher instructional quality as well as better learning outcomes and generic attributes among students, besides ensuring that lecturers can fully dedicate themselves to the interests of their institution, students, parents, and other stakeholders.

1.2. Significance of the Study

Several studies were conducted to investigate the relationship between job satisfaction and locus of control by using different samples and instruments. Nevertheless, quantitative research on these psychosocial variables is still lacking in Malaysia, especially Sabah. Besides the USA, most empirical studies examining locus of control and job satisfaction were conducted in Turkey, Indonesia, and India; hence, it is important to examine their robustness in the Malaysian educational context. Further, the pandemic has compelled many Malaysian lecturers to shift from traditional classroom delivery to hybrid classes; correlating their locus of control and job satisfaction can yield greater insight into the impact of the unprecedented situation and new pedagogic norms in higher education.

Additionally, as private tertiary institutions in Malaysia are facing fierce competition due to the internationalization of higher education, maintaining organizational commitment has become the key for profitability, social responsibility, and sustainability. Research on lecturers' psychosocial attributes would provide policymakers the guidelines needed to implement innovative strategies that promote high organizational commitment of staff, which in turn, would augment the overall performance and ranking of the institution. On the other hand, highly qualified individuals are becoming increasingly demanding with regard to things that keep them truly engaged and committed. In brief, research on staff's psychosocial attributes helps generate awareness on the competitive employment landscape in order to effectively source and retain outstanding talent.

1.3. Research Questions

To provide a succinct, clear, and data-based query that guides the research study, two research questions were formulated to define its focus and direction. Moreover, they

also helped address specific problems, knowledge gaps, and issues related to locus of control and job satisfaction via data collection and statistical analysis. The two research questions were deemed effective because they were focused, feasible within the available resources, and rooted in existing literature, which helped to define the scope of the study and align with its overall purpose. They are as follows:

- i. Was the relationship between locus of control and job satisfaction among lecturers significant?
- ii. What were the descriptive statistics of lecturers' locus of control and job satisfaction and implications?

2. Review of Literature

A literature review was conducted to provide the writers with a proper guide to locus of control and job satisfaction. Since the writers have limited time to conduct the research, it gave them a quick overview and acted as a fundamental framework. Additionally, it allowed them to download journal articles, which updated them with what is current in the field of educational psychology in the context of locus of control and job satisfaction at higher institutions of learning in Malaysia. Besides, its breadth and depth would reflect the credibility of the writers in their field, besides providing a firm foundation for their investigation. Lastly, articles in the literature review were synthesized and reported in direct chronology, covering the empirical studies published from 2011 to 2025.

In an earlier study, [Basak and Ghosh \(2011\)](#) who examined the links among job satisfaction, locus of control, and educational setting among teachers, revealed that female teachers tend to score higher in terms of locus of control and school setting. Besides, locus of control was also found to be significantly associated with both job satisfaction and educational setting; teachers with internality tend to demonstrate greater job satisfaction compared to those with externality. Further, teachers with internality also tend to perceive that their own actions and attitudes primarily influence the outcomes of events and things, besides displaying greater willingness to deliver and accept feedback and higher ability to form favorable relationships with others to attain common goals. In the same year, [Lakshman and Jagdishchandra \(2011\)](#), who examined the influence of locus of control on the job satisfaction among public sector staff, indicated that internal locus of control tends to be significantly and positively correlated to job satisfaction.

A quantitative study by [Mahajan and Kaur \(2012\)](#) investigated the relationship between job satisfaction and locus of control among teachers. Findings showed that job satisfaction and locus of control among both genders tend to be significantly correlated. Further, both male and female teachers with higher job satisfaction tend to demonstrate significantly greater internality compared to female teachers with lower job satisfaction. Additionally, the relationship between job satisfaction and locus of control among teachers was also investigated by [Ganji, Vardanyan, and Navabinezhad \(2013\)](#). Findings revealed that job satisfaction of both genders tends to be significantly correlated with locus of control. Moreover, teachers of both genders with higher job satisfaction were found to differ significantly from those with lower job satisfaction, with the former groups possessing greater internality. [Chhabra \(2013\)](#), who analyzed the influence of job satisfaction and locus of control on organizational commitment, disclosed that both variables tend to be positively correlated with organizational commitment, with locus of

control also acting as a moderator in the relationship between job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Additionally, the relationship between job satisfaction and locus of control among teachers were also studied by [Akkaya and Akyol \(2016\)](#). Findings indicated that teachers tend to exhibit a moderate level of internality, perceiving that most occurrences are within their control and that they possess the capacity to moderate their impact. They also tend to perceive that their actions and experiences are not associated with chance, luck, or faith, implying that they are primarily internals. Moreover, they also tend to make logical decisions when facing various possibilities or scenarios. Lastly, teachers' internality was found to be significantly related to job satisfaction, implying that they tend to have the capacity to make sound decisions when implementing educational activities related to their field. On the other hand, [Sembiring and Purba \(2019\)](#), who examined the interrelationships among job satisfaction, locus of control, interpersonal communication, and job setting among teachers, asserted that job satisfaction tends to be directly influenced by locus of control, interpersonal communication, and job setting, with locus of control being the most powerful predictor.

In their empirical study, [Yuwono et al. \(2020\)](#), who examined the impact of locus of control on the job satisfaction among customer service staff, disclosed that internality tends to exert a significant and positive influence on job satisfaction. Among the various dimensions of job satisfaction, communication appears to be best related to internality, which tends to help staff to effectively procure information needed to strategize their job activities and resolve occupational problems. Findings imply that organizations should encourage staff to demonstrate high initiative and optimism to augment their job satisfaction and productivity. Likewise, [Olonade et al. \(2020\)](#), who investigated teachers' job satisfaction, locus of control, and occupational stress, discovered a significant and positive relationship between internality and job satisfaction, with locus of control acting as a significant predictor. In their investigation, [Bani-Hani and Hamdan-Mansour \(2020\)](#) analyzed the moderating effect of locus of control on the correlation between nurses' job satisfaction and job demand. Findings revealed that locus of control tends to act as a significant moderator on the correlation between the two variables. While externality tends to have a negative influence on the correlation between job satisfaction and job demand, the correlation tends to be positively moderated by internal locus of control.

In an investigation on the impact of locus of control on job satisfaction and occupational stress among private employees, [Padmanabhan \(2021\)](#) found that individuals with internality tend to demonstrate higher job satisfaction. It was also found that (1) externality and occupational stress tend to be positively correlated, (2) externality and job satisfaction tend to be negatively correlated, and (3) occupational stress and job satisfaction tend to be negatively correlated. Overall findings imply that organizations need to promote internality amongst staff because it plays a crucial role in raising job satisfaction, while reducing occupational stress.

In a more recent study, [Simmers and McMurray \(2022\)](#) examined the impact of self-concept (locus of control and work ethic) on job satisfaction within the postindustrial setting. Findings indicated that work ethic tends to significantly mediate the impact of self-concept on job satisfaction. However, findings showed that work ethic and job satisfaction tend to be negatively related, implying that dissonance seems to exist between staff's work effort and perceived job satisfaction. While acknowledging the

cruciality of work ethic, staff seem to perceive that their individual efforts are not adequately rewarded or recognized. In another study, [Hadi et al. \(2023\)](#) analyzed the relationships among job satisfaction, locus of control, and proactive personality. Findings revealed that both locus of control and proactive personality tend to be positively correlated with job satisfaction, with the relationship being mediated by education status. Besides, job satisfaction and locus of control were also found to be significantly correlated, with the relationship becoming more prominent among staff without academic degrees. Findings imply that organizations should consider interindividual differences amongst staff, such as personality traits and educational background, when attempting to raise their locus of control and occupational wellbeing.

On the other hand, [Oktaviana, Fatkhurahmana, and Supeno \(2023\)](#) determined the impact of locus of control on job satisfaction among civil servants, with work-life balance acting as a mediator. Findings showed that internality tends to exert a positive impact on job satisfaction and work-life balance. Findings imply that organizations should strive to increase staff's job satisfaction by augmenting their internal locus of control and work-life balance. While internality can be improved by strengthening supervision and offering equitable promotional opportunities based on job competence and outcomes, work-life balance can be achieved by adjusting staff's workload so that they can spend quality time with their families during work holidays.

In their analysis on the relationship between partners' locus of control and their spouses' job satisfaction, [Tran and Tran \(2024\)](#) disclosed that wives' locus of control tends to have a positive influence on their husbands' job satisfaction in terms of remuneration and working hours. Findings imply that organizations should underscore the cruciality of locus of control in promoting work-life balance and healthy marital relationships, which in turn, tend to increase job satisfaction. Organizations should propagate a working environment characterized by flexible work schedules, working from home, family days, and family-oriented staff activities. On the other hand, [Talamala \(2024\)](#) studied the relationships among job satisfaction, locus of control, and occupational stress among IT professionals. Findings showed that internality tends to yield higher job satisfaction regardless of gender. In contrast, externality and occupational stress tend to result in lower job satisfaction. Findings imply that organizations should enhance job satisfaction by increasing promotion opportunities, equitable supervision, favorable operating conditions, and collegiality amongst staff.

In their investigation on the impact of job satisfaction, locus of control, and self-efficacy on organizational citizenship behavior among bank staff, [Yennita, Irawan, and Eliza \(2025\)](#) found that the three constructs tend to exert a significant and positive influence on organizational citizenship behavior. Findings imply that bank staff with high job satisfaction tend to possess the capability to achieve life satisfaction through extra-role behavior, while performing tasks that promote organizational effectiveness. On the other hand, [Mishra \(2025\)](#), who examined the influence of locus of control and role stress on bank employees' job satisfaction, revealed that locus of control, role ambiguity, role overload, and role conflict tend to be significantly and negatively correlated with satisfaction with management and overall job satisfaction. Besides, total job stress was found to contribute to the variance in explaining satisfaction with management, while role conflict was found to contribute to the variance in explaining total job satisfaction.

[Suhelmi, Mahdani, and Kesuma \(2025\)](#) studied the effect of locus of control and information technology usage on the job satisfaction among prosecutor's office staff.

Findings indicated that locus of control and information technology usage tend to have a significant effect on job satisfaction. Additionally, job satisfaction was found to act as a mediator in the relationship between locus of control and staff performance, and in the relationship between information technology usage and staff performance. Findings imply that staff with internality tend to be more proactive in seeking solutions and exhibit higher job satisfaction, believing that their efforts can directly contribute to job achievement. Therefore, organizations should highlight the ramifications of internal locus of control on job satisfaction by providing appropriate training programs and managerial support to instill a more positive mindset, which leads to enhanced job satisfaction and organizational effectiveness.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Approach

This study adopted a quantitative research approach, which was deemed appropriate for systematically investigating perceived attributes linked to job satisfaction and locus of control. The research design was directly related to the primary purpose of the current study, which was to investigate the link between job satisfaction and locus of control among lecturers in Sabah, Malaysia. Besides, using a quantitative method also allowed the writers to practice numerical evaluation and precise measurement of the link between the two constructs at PHEIs. Lastly, it also allowed them to determine if significant differences existed in the two constructs by way of gender, age, and job experience by using SPSS 26.0.

Additionally, this study employed two structured, Likert-scale questionnaires that allowed for efficient data collection from lecturers, while guaranteeing adequate representation within the sample. The survey method could enhance not just the reliability and validity of the research findings, but also their generalizability to broader higher education contexts. Furthermore, this study design also allowed for effective statistical analysis, which could furnish numerical-based information needed to report findings, draw conclusions, and make recommendations on how to leverage locus of control to augment job satisfaction among lecturers in Sabah, Malaysia.

3.2. Research Location

This study was carried out in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, the capital city of the island state where quantitative research on educational psychology at higher institutions of learning is scarce. Kota Kinabalu was chosen for its distinctive educational landscape, which includes several private colleges that can provide a sufficiently representative sample of the lecturer population in Sabah, thus allowing for a relatively fair assessment of lecturers' perceptions of job satisfaction in relation to locus of control.

3.3. Sample and Justification

The sample of this study comprised 60 lecturers ($n = 60$) from three private institutions of higher learning (PHEIs) in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. All participants possess at least a bachelor's degree and are currently working full-time in their respective institutions. Initially, deans, coordinators, and registrars of 10 randomly chosen colleges were contacted via email, but eventually, only three colleges agreed to participate in the study. Administrators who exhibited interest in the study shared the survey link with lecturers

and urged them to respond. This selection procedure prioritized voluntary participation and convenient access, yielding a realistic and contextually relevant sample.

Respondents come from culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse communities in Sabah. The sample size was determined based on theoretical and statistical criteria. According to the central limit theorem, a minimum of 30 participants is generally sufficient to ensure statistical power and generalizability for basic survey research (Roscoe, 1975; RUBIKTOP, 2023). Additionally, the sample was deemed representative of lecturers from the local PHEIs in Kota Kinabalu; hence, selection bias was minimized. Systematic random sampling of colleges was practiced to secure a diverse range of perspectives across different age, gender, and work experience. By allowing all eligible PHEIs an equal chance of selection, this method could prevent the under- or over-representation of specific groups, while increasing the generalizability of findings to a broader population of PHEI lecturers. Lastly, PHEIs were chosen because of their physical proximity to the university college where the first author serves as program leader in its Master of Education in Leadership. In general, the study was delimited by proximity, accessibility, and administrators' willingness to participate in the research study.

While the sample size seemed small, it met the minimum requirement for quantitative research in the social sciences, particularly in the field of educational psychology; a sample size of 30 to 100 is recommended for basic survey research (Roscoe, 1975; RUBIKTOP, 2023). This rule of thumb is supported by the central limit theorem, which stipulates that sampling distributions will approach normality when there are 30 or more respondents, this allowing for acceptable statistical inference. Furthermore, the current sample size ensured a reasonable margin of error and enough power to identify modest effects in nonparametric analyses, such as the Kruskal-Wallis, Mann-Whitney U, and Wilcoxon signed rank tests, which were used to interpret data in the current study.

The sample consisted of 28.33 percent males and 71.67 percent females. Age-wise, 16.67 percent are 25 to 30 years old, 30 percent are 31 to 35 years old, 13.33 percent are 36 to 40 years old, 11.67 percent are 41 to 45 years old, 11.76 percent are 45 to 50 years old, and 15 percent are over 50 years old. Experience-wise, 23.33 percent have worked for one to five years, 23.33 percent have worked for six to 10 years, 18.33 percent have worked for 11 to 15 years, 10 percent have worked for 16 to 20 years, and 25 percent have worked for more than 20 years (see Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic Information of Sample ($n = 60$)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age (years)	25-30	10	16.67
	31-35	18	30.00
	36-40	8	13.33
	41-45	8	13.33
	45-50	7	11.67
	> 50	9	15.00
Gender	Male	17	28.33
	Female	43	71.67
Job experience (years)	1-5	14	23.33
	6-10	14	23.33
	11-15	11	18.33
	16-20	6	10.00

> 20

15

25.00

3.4. Instruments

Two structured questionnaires were administered to obtain data on locus of control and job satisfaction at three PHEIs in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah. First, job satisfaction was measured by using the Job Satisfaction Survey (Spector, 1985), which encompasses nine subscale dimensions, including promotion, pay, benefits, supervision, rewards, operating conditions, coworkers, communication, and the work itself. For this study, it was scored on a five-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree = 1 to strongly agree = 5. Responses were marked in a positive direction (high score = 162-180, average score = 126-161, low score = 125 and below). According to Tsounis and Sarafis (2018), the Job Satisfaction Survey has high factor loads, ranging from 0.61 to 0.90, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.62 to 0.87. Similarly, Saane et al. (2003) found that the Job Satisfaction Survey has reasonable test-retest reliabilities ranging from .64 to .80, with a construct validity of .78.

Second, the Rotter Locus of Control Scale (Rotter, 1966) comprising 29 pairs of items was used to measure locus of control, and responses were scored in a positive direction (positive = 1; negative = 0; full score = 29). Its dimensionality and reliability were analyzed by Lange and Tiggemann (1981), who revealed that its test-retest reliability is .61. Additionally, Shapurian and Hojat (1987) found that its test-retest reliability is .84. Lastly, Beretvas, Suizzo, and Durham (2007), who explored the variability between the Rotter Scale and Nowicki-Strickland Scale, found no significant differences in the predicted internal consistency estimate for both scales.

3.5. Procedures and Data Analysis

Lecturers were required to complete the Job Satisfaction Survey and Rotter Locus of Control Scale on Google Forms. Anonymity was strictly maintained to control bias; the only demographic information required was age, gender, educational background, and job experience. Responses were computer-scored and data were then analyzed by using SPSS 26.0. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used to assess of the linear association between job satisfaction and locus of control, while attempting to draw a line of best fit through the two datasets to indicate how well the data points fitted the new model or line of best fit. Lastly, descriptive statistics were calculated to determine if majority of the lecturers had internal/external locus of control as well as high/low job satisfaction.

4. Findings

Results showed that two dimensions of job satisfaction, namely, job benefits and the job itself tend to be significantly correlated with internal locus of control (see Table 2).

Table 2: Correlation Between Job Satisfaction and Locus of Control

Dimensions of job satisfaction	Mean	Standard deviation	Correlation with locus of control	p-value
Pay	12.57	3.65	0.041	0.753
Promotion	12.97	3.33	0.054	0.683
Supervision	13.48	3.16	0.129	0.326

Benefits	12.20	3.00	**0.010	0.938
Rewards	12.62	3.49	-0.111	0.399
Job itself	9.10	3.10	*0.017	0.900
Coworkers	13.15	2.86	0.125	0.341
Operating conditions	15.47	2.76	0.074	0.572
Communication	13.45	3.22	0.239	0.066
Total score for job satisfaction	115.00	18.46	0.096	0.467

** $p > .01$; * $p > 0.05$

Descriptive statistics showed that a large number of lecturers tend to experience low job satisfaction with a mean of 115. A substantial number of them also tend to demonstrate low internal locus of control with a mean of 18.23 (see [Table 3](#)).

Table 3: Means of Locus of Control and Job Satisfaction

Variable	Category	Mean of locus of control	Mean of job satisfaction
Age (years)	25-30	16.30	120.80
	31-35	18.11	117.50
	36-40	15.75	120.13
	41-45	20.38	100.13
	45-50	18.29	106.57
	> 50	20.89	118.78
	Overall	18.23	115.00
Gender	Male	17.94	113.12
	Female	18.35	115.74
	Overall	18.23	115.00
Job experience (years)	1-5	16.43	118.29
	6-10	16.93	121.93
	11-15	20.18	110.45
	16-20	18.50	102.67
	> 20	19.60	113.73
	Overall	18.23	115.00

5. Implications and Recommendations

5.1. Job Satisfaction and Locus of control

Current findings showed that two dimensions of job satisfaction, namely, job benefits and the job itself, tend to be significantly correlated with internal locus of control, implying that, the more internality lecturers display, the more positively they perceive their job benefits and the job itself.

5.1.1. Low Job Satisfaction

a) Low Job Satisfaction Among Teachers

Findings imply that a large number (60 percent) of the lecturers tend to demonstrate low job satisfaction. This finding was supported by previous studies; for example, [Chaplain \(1995\)](#) found that two-thirds of teachers tend to show dissatisfaction with their job, particularly in terms of teaching resources; besides, low job satisfaction also tends to be associated with reports of high occupational stress. Further, [Sen \(2008\)](#)

discovered that many teachers tend to experience low job satisfaction and also high stress. Similarly, [George, Louw, and Badenhorst \(2008\)](#) found that teachers tend to exhibit significant levels of dissatisfaction pertaining to intrinsic work factors in relation to school area and rank. Besides, low job satisfaction also tends to be significantly related to emotional exhaustion and depersonalization.

Additionally, [Kyara \(2013\)](#) asserted that teachers tend to demonstrate a very low level of job satisfaction in relation to communication feedback, school supervision, and accessibility to instructional and learning resources. They also tend to be dissatisfied with school-parent relationships, remuneration, in-service training opportunities, and the promotion system. Besides, [Ansah-Hughes \(2016\)](#) disclosed that a majority of teachers tend to prefer to leave their profession due to dissatisfaction with job security and service conditions. On the other hand, [Raymond \(2018\)](#) posited that many teachers tend to display low job satisfaction due to (1) the lack of professional recognition and respect, (2) being overburdened with responsibility, (3) the belief that they are grossly underpaid, (4) inequitable district policies, and (4) an unsupportive working environment. According to [UCL Institute of Education \(2018\)](#), many teachers in England tend to have the lowest job satisfaction among 22 English-speaking countries. Excessive workload, low pay, and a stifling and uncreative curriculum, as well as low morale tend to act as the major factors that have driven many teachers out of the profession altogether. Finally, [Steiner and Woo \(2021\)](#), who fielded a Rand teacher survey, reiterated that many teachers tend to experience low job satisfaction due to job-related stressors throughout the academic year, which in turn, have resulted in 25 percent of teachers considering leaving the profession. Overall, low job satisfaction tends to be mainly related to such stressors as online problems, depressive symptoms, and burnout.

b) Low Job Satisfaction Among Malaysian Academics

[Huda et al. \(2004\)](#) revealed that low job satisfaction tends to be common among Malaysian lecturers in relation to decision authority/latitude, occupational demand/strain, and clinical depression, while [Wong and Heng \(2009\)](#) discovered that the job dissatisfaction among Malaysian faculty members tends to be significantly related to the lack of reinforcers, including interpersonal relationships, personal achievement/growth, supervision, recognition, responsibility, working conditions, and the job itself. Further, [Henny et al. \(2014\)](#) revealed that job satisfaction among Malaysian academicians tends to be significantly predicted by job burnout, especially among clinical academicians, junior academicians, and those with lower remuneration.

Moreover, [Abdul-Rahman, Yaacob, and Yeon \(2018\)](#) found that a majority of Malaysian academics tend to strongly disagree and disagree that they are satisfied with their job benefits in terms of basic salary, existing emoluments, annual increment, and bonuses, thus indicating that their workload is incompatible with their pecuniary benefits. Besides, most of the academics shoulder a heavy workload because their responsibilities are no longer confined within the boundaries of teaching, research, and community service. Additionally, job promotion among academics is not time-based unlike other jobs. To get promotion, they have to achieve academic excellence according to specific criteria, which in reality could take years. Lastly, [Mohamed et al. \(2021\)](#) disclosed that, compared to non-academicians, Malaysian academicians demonstrated greater burnout levels and psychological distress in relation to personal/work/client issues.

5.2. Ways to Raise Job Satisfaction

[Sembiring and Purba \(2019\)](#) reiterated that job satisfaction, interpersonal communication skills, and productive work environment should be included in the strategic planning of human resource development at organizations. For instance, PHEI departmental heads should be knowledgeable of the psychosocial variables that influence job satisfaction to create a teaching-learning milieu that will elicit positive energy from lecturers and increase their job focus and scope, while encouraging them to generate innovative ideas to augment students' cognitive, affective, and psychomotor development. Besides, PHEIs should also formulate policies and strategies that promote collegial and empathetic relationships among academics to improve overall instructional competence, research quality, and community outreach. Additionally, PHEI administrators should strive to strengthen the psychosocial attributes among staff since they impact job motivation, work performance, use of resources, and professional appraisal. [Hawes and Nelson \(2021\)](#) recommended that administrators bridge any perceived disconnect between staff and the administration by fostering effective interpersonal relationships, while stakeholders at the district, state, and federal levels should acknowledge the pressures and challenges faced by academics.

According to [Dewar \(2025\)](#), organizations can improve job satisfaction by building a culture of frequent, meaningful recognition, listening to staff feedback, and promoting a sense of belonging and inclusion. First, PHEIs should build a culture of frequent, meaningful recognition since it is a fundamental driver of employee satisfaction. Lecturers who feel seen and appreciated will be more motivated and engaged; thus, they are less likely to consider about working somewhere else. PHEIs can should provide recognition that is point-based, transparent, timely, peer-driven, and aligned to organizational values. They should make staff appreciation part of the everyday workflow rather than just a once-a-year appraisal. Second, PHEIs should listen to employee feedback and act on it rather than treating it as dust-collecting spreadsheet. They should use science-backed feedback tools that combine human insight with AI-powered analysis to show lecturers that their voices matter, and more important, that their input can drive innovation and change. Third, PHEIs should promote a sense of belonging and inclusion amongst lecturers. It is not a luxury for lecturers to feel like they belong at work; it is a key part for them to feel satisfied and stay engaged. Lecturers who feel accepted, respected, and connected tend to display greater loyalty and job satisfaction. PHEIs can use staff resource groups to conduct inclusive recognition campaigns by weaving in inclusive values into the fabric of every acknowledgement and celebration.

Further, organizations can also elevate job satisfaction by offering meaningful rewards and flexibility, supporting career growth and development, strengthening management-staff relationships, and incorporating tools to simplify the staff experience ([Dewar, 2025](#)). First, PHEIs should know that lecturers tend to be more satisfied when they are rewarded with options that actually matter to them, whether that is a new gadget, a wellness perk, or the freedom to work from home. PHEIs can offer such perks as flexible scheduling without adding complexity. Second, to prevent lecturers from feeling trapped in a career dead end, PHEIs can offer stretch assignments, mentorship, and training to show them that they are invested in their future rather than just their present role. They should reinforce professional growth by tying recognition to skill development and learning milestones, thus making career trajectories worth celebrating, not just tracking. Third, PHEIs should strengthen management-staff relationships to promote day-to-day

job satisfaction amongst lecturers. They can encourage regular one-on-one meetings, set clear expectations, and use coaching over command. They should ensure that lecturers can access real-time recognition and feedback data to perform more effectively and increase their intention to stay. Fourth, PHEIs should simplify digital tools to avoid tech whiplashing. Lecturers should not be required to use any complicated logins just to voice their opinions or make suggestions. For instance, PHEIs can use such software as Workday, Microsoft Teams, and Slack to ensure the smooth flow of recognition, feedback, and rewards, without creating any friction.

5.3. Low Internal Locus of Control

Current findings imply that a substantial proportion (40 percent) of lecturers tend to possess low internal locus of control. However, no empirical research on Malaysian lecturers' locus of control is available for comparison. [Yeoh et al. \(2027\)](#) indicated that Malaysians tend to experience high levels of emotional distress, with their depressive symptoms predictably related to greater stress and lower internal locus of control. Moreover, individuals with low internality or high externality tend to (1) have lower self-esteem and self-confidence in decision-making, (b) be pessimists and cynics who refuse to raise their hopes to avoid disappointment, (c) lack resilience, self-control, and a sense of purpose, and are therefore unable to determine what they want out of life ([PsychTests AIM, Inc., 2021](#)).

5.4. Ways to Raise Internal Locus of Control

Deeper insight into the ramifications of job satisfaction and internal locus of control enables policymakers and human resource practitioners to implement programs aim at increasing the organizational commitment among academics. Higher education authorities should pay greater attention in augmenting staff motivation and productivity to boost their job satisfaction and internality. According to [Batra \(n. d.\)](#), introspection is an effective way to enhance one's internality. Therefore, PHEI lecturers should allocate some time to analyze their own perceptions of, and attitudes toward, events and things. Spending time with themselves enables them to determine what they really desire, besides gaining deeper insight into available opportunities and choices. Further, introspection also assists them in filtering information from external networks and the outside world, while allowing them to pay greater attention to their own thoughts and emotions. Besides reflecting on things in solitude, lecturers should also spend time alone to engage in mindfulness activities, reading, and journaling, which can help manage stress, alleviate depression and anxiety, and improve overall sense of control.

On the other hand, [Sahito and Vaisanen \(2017\)](#) recommended that staff be governed through a participative/democratic leadership style, transparent system of administration, trust, job security, positive social interaction, and appreciation for task accomplishments. Administrators should not only make the necessary resources available, but also should utilize them properly so that staff can effectively disseminate subject matter, conduct meaningful research, and actively engage in community service in line with SDG 4 Quality Education, besides enhancing the reputation and ranking of their institution.

According to [Jurado et al. \(2019\)](#), there are some measures that are useful for enhancing lecturers' internal locus of control and job satisfaction. For example, PHEIs can implement a comprehensive awareness training program that focuses on the emotional

and motivational factors impacting the pedagogic and learning process, which encompasses (1) active coping strategies for professional demands at PHEIs, (2) resources for enhancing occupational commitment and managing job stress, (3) teacher autonomy and personal efficacy to reinforce individual and collective competence, and (4) the application of participatory, innovative, and communicational methodologies. Additionally, lecturers should be given sufficient time and space to assimilate professional competences related to the teaching and learning process, for example, they should receive affective, social, and tangible compensation for juggling among job requirements, research, and community service.

According to [Entrepreneur Pathways, Inc. \(2020\)](#), individuals can increase their internal locus of control by starting to take responsibility of the outcomes of situations rather than shifting the blame to someone or something else. Lecturers can modify their external-oriented thoughts, such as, “it will take some luck”, “I hope they will see my effort”, or “if this happens”, by using internal-oriented statements, such as, “determination, not luck, will take me to my future goals”, “when they see my effort”, or “when I make this happen”.

Embracing failure is another way to improve internality, suggested [Entrepreneur Pathways, Inc. \(2020\)](#). Lecturers should take failure as an opportunity to learn. While it is unwelcome, failure tends to occur whenever individuals are striving to accomplish challenging goals. Lecturers should bravely face situations even if they believe that there is a slight chance of failure; instead of succumbing to the fear of failure, they should confront complex situations with determination and courage. Rather than blaming others for their failures, they should examine each failure to remind themselves that the setback could be due to inadequate preparation, lack of effective communication skills, or some setback that can be improved.

According to [InnerChange \(2022\)](#), individuals should remember several things to develop their internal locus of control. Lecturers who want to feel better need to change the way they live their lives. They must examine what they are doing to contribute to their own problems. The only thing that they can control is themselves; hence, if they are dissatisfied in a work relationship, they need to focus on what they can do to improve the relationship and not attempt to change the other colleague. Further, lecturers should be aware that symptoms are not the problem. While wanting to fix the symptoms, they still need to focus on the root problem. While lecturers cannot always control their feelings or physiology, they are in charge of their own thoughts and actions. While they cannot always choose what happens to them, they can choose how they respond in a creative or pragmatic manner.

In the same vein, [McAdam \(2025\)](#) postulated that people should recognize the signs of internality, regain personal power, acquire new adaption skills, and modify their thinking patterns and attitudes to increase their internal locus of control. First, PHEI lecturers should (1) take responsibility for their actions, (2) believe that they can influence outcomes, (3) acknowledge that they are likely to succeed when they acquire the relevant skills and apply them to do the right work, (4) focus on what they can change themselves rather than trying to control others, and (5) set healthy boundaries and pay attention to what they can change during challenging times. Second, PHEI lecturers can regain personal power by taking an honest look at where their thoughts are sabotaging them. They should avoid leaning on the idea that they are victims, blaming themselves or others. Besides, they should be clear on what they can and cannot

control without internalizing everything to maintain mental and psychological strength. Third, instead of wallowing in despair or blaming the industry, manufacturers, the economy, or the government, PHEI lecturers should explore if there are alternative skillsets that would give them more autonomy to do the things that can yield success and a sense of achievement. Fourth, PHEI lecturers should change their negative perceptions and attitudes into something more constructive. While they are unable to directly control the laws, social rules, or how others choose to interact with them, they can decide to what degree those extraneous forces influence how they feel and think about themselves.

To conclude, this study was limited to 60 college lecturers from Sabah, Malaysia. To increase generalizability, it should be repeated with a different research design using the same or different questionnaires with different samples in different settings (either institutions or states). Future research samples should be more representative of the Malaysian milieu by examining the contexts in which the studies are conducted and how those might influence results. Lastly, relevant groups based on ethnicity, gender, or job experience from the larger population in the correct proportions should be used.

Ethics Approval and Consent to Participate

This study has strictly adhered to all ethical procedures involving the use of human subjects. Informed consent was obtained from all respondents who were ascertained of their anonymity, with their responses kept strictly confidential. They were also informed that the study was of low risk and that they could stop participating any time without any repercussions.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no potential conflict of interest regarding this study in terms of the research or publication of this article.

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