PERCEIVED INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES AND WORK ENGAGEMENT IN CIVIL SERVICE: A CHALLENGE FOR 21 CENTURY LEADER IN THE PUBLIC SECTORS OF MALAYSIA

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Abstract:

Leadership in the 21st Century demands a great leader who is inclusive in leveraging knowledge, insights and perspectives in diverse workplaces which can make organizations capture a competitive advantage from changing demographics across the workplace and in the marketplace. It needs a leader to take on the opportunity, new way and understanding of what to do and how to do things differently. To be a great leader in public service, organizations would need to invest in developing them. Despite investing significant resources in the training and development of leaders for their competencies, quality, efficiency and improving organization's performance, many leaders often feel unprepared to be inclusive. The aim of this study, therefore, is to examine how inclusive leadership challenges foster employee work engagement. Three key leadership challenges (personal leadership, managing and motivating, building and leading a team) were successfully identified by Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL) and measured as significant toward employee work engagement in the selected public sectors in Malaysia. A quantitative study was conducted, and hypotheses were tested on a sample of 240 employees in four divisions using Pearson correlation and Multiple Regressions analysis. The result shows that inclusive leadership challenges were positively associated with work engagement, personal leadership challenges with the unstandardized coefficients Beta value of 0.316 followed by building and leading team challenge with Beta value of 0.206 were supported and stronger predictors in influencing employees' work engagement in the public sector. This study shows that greater concerns from the employees in the public sector on the quality of the leadership in the 21st Century currently bring daily to work practice. Inclusive leadership is crucial for employee engagement, commitment and performance. This study also contributes both theoretical and empirical value to the public sector in formulating proper strategies for having great leaders to fostering inclusiveness in employees' work engagement.

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1. Introduction

Peter Drucker has quoted leadership is about lifting a person's vision to higher sights, raising a person's performance to a higher standard and building a personality beyond its normal limitations. From this thought, we know that 21 Century leaders need to anticipate and embrace change and be agile enough to face any challenges that are coming to them from all sides. As the world today is riven with conflict, dissension and uncertainty, people around the world have witnessed how world leaders react, solve problems, handle crises and make decisions in their countries. For instance, at the global level, the current conflicts between Russia and Ukraine, a trade war between the US and China, instability in the Korean peninsula and unending conflict in the Middle East. In the face of instability, many leaders tend to pull up the drawbridge and defend their castle. Great Britain is pulling out of the European Union and Chinese leaders are strenuously defending territories in Hong Kong, South China Sea and Xinjiang Province. Every leader is expected to reach out across lines of any conflict; however, they tend to take comfort and solace in their own kind. Unsurprisingly, this only makes matters worse. Moreover, leaders have been dealing with volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity for decades and in this 21 century with ever-evolving technology and new processes, leaders and organizations are facing even much stronger headwinds than ever before. As in Malaysia, the behavior of leaders is not much different whether it is in public sector institutions and corporates. Malaysia is strongly armed with a cultural complex where it has 137 living languages, out of these, 41 of these languages are spoken in Peninsular Malaysia. Some languages spoken by Malaysians are globally recognized and relevant such as Malay, Mandarin, Hindi and Tamil. Many Malaysians also could speak good English. Undoubted, it is a challenge for the leaders of Malaysia to leverage Malaysia's cultural diversity to improve organizational performance. In achieving this, Malaysian leaders need the right mindset to become an inclusive leaders who can improve employee engagement and performance at all levels.

According to reliable reports in the public sector, the leadership shown in the government-linked companies were more inclusive, and they performed better than those that are not. Although there is no specific study to measure the performance of Government Departments, however, Mckinsey's global research, found that if the leadership was neither diverse nor inclusive, the performance is not likely to be optimal. They are three ways how leaders in Malaysia could leverage cultural diversity in the administration to improve employee engagement and performance. Firstly, leaders must believe that cultural diversity is an asset for the transition that is from one generation to another generation and this would have a larger pool of talent to choose from and a better chance. Secondly, inclusive leaders are self-aware advocates for diversity and would respect people's diverse backgrounds to be more engaged and possess the skills to

leverage the differences with their employees to achieve better performance. This shows that inclusive leaders have the patience and courage to understand deeply the level of their employees' engagement by assessing the goodness and strengths of an employee from diverse backgrounds. Thirdly, leaders should not be complacent about employees who are different because employees from diverse backgrounds surround them. Moreover, most organizations and business today compete and operates in a very challenging environment, some are struggling for survival for their targets. Any leaders, be it in the public service departments or in corporate who want to achieve a successful organization or do great in their departmental performance should look for talent from diverse cultural backgrounds. An inclusive leader with a logical mindset and skills was found to be able to create a deep sense of belonging for employees or people of all backgrounds. With the support, courage, fairly treatment and guidance are given, employees would be more engaged and willing to take part in decisions making that would affect them. If employees sense that their treatment is biased or unfair, they will disengage and this has deleterious consequences on overall performance. Once leader value the cultural uniqueness of their employees, it would encourage the employees to come forward with suggestions and ideas that could enrich the organization

1.1 Rationale for the Study

As stated by Korn Ferry Institute in their research about the 21st century leadership, all leaders are expected to demonstrate to face contemporary challenges and they must excel to be global leaders, growth leaders, change leaders and innovation leaders. From a global perspective, we have witnessed many incompetent leaders perform unsatisfactorily and at the time we do come across leaders who had demonstrated avoidable traits that instead of propelling the business and organization forward, somehow lead to the deterioration of the entire organization's policies and culture. For instance, a lack of good engaging leadership has caused organizations to bear huge costs annually. A leader with inclusive characters gains supports from co-workers for being trustworthy and selfless, truthful and compassionate. Generally, if leaders consistently displaced these traits in their workplace, the employees would be more engaged and committed to their work. However, past studies conducted by some researchers have concluded that not all leaders including many of the most successful ones exhibit these qualities. For instance, Gallup Pool in 2016 found that only 18% of managers demonstrate a high level of talent for managing others. The remaining 82% of managers are not very good at leading people. The study also estimated that this lack of leadership capability cost U.S Corporation more than $550 billion annually. In a separate study, Dacher Keltner, a professor of psychology at the University of California, said that power corruption normally would make leaders start to feel powerful, and their more benevolent qualities such as empathy may start to decline. Aside, another study also described that people in positions of corporate power are three more likely than lower-level employees to interrupt coworkers, multitask during meetings, raise their voices and say insulting things. In another study by McKinsey & Company on more than 52,000

managers and employees in 2016, in their findings, the teams concluded that an inflated sense of self was one of the factors, which make leaders become incapable. The study found that 86% of leaders believe they model the improvements they want employees to make, while another 77% of leaders believed they "inspire action". Comparing these self-perceptions to the previous study cited by Gallup pool in which it showed that 82% of managers and executives are seen as lacking in leadership skills by their employees. In Malaysia, it is not an exception. Malaysia has also experienced failure in leadership for instance in the failure of corporate cases such Perwaja Steel, Sim Darby, Malaysian Airlines, 1MDB and a few more not to mention. Some views that the failure was due to external factors, however, the most acceptable and practical reasons were the failure of leadership in governing the corporate governance which includes quality of board directors, head of department and managers. The roles of inclusive leadership emerge crucial and significant in effective corporate governance in ensuring the support and engagement given from the employees at all levels.

As shown in a survey by McKinsey (2002), most investors would prepare to pay a premium to invest with a company that has good and effective corporate governance. In Malaysia also, most of the leaders have competencies, however, it is still unclear what competencies will lead the leaders from top to bottom to suit with diversified next generation, change in technology, religion and culture and rapidly changing socio-economic environment. For instance, in a recent remark from a former health director general on the lack of leadership in handling Covid-19, sources said that leaders and those managing the pandemic were not flexible enough to change. These leaders were stuck with the policies that they initiated earlier, they did not engage with experts in the country, and failed in communicating between policymakers, professionals, the public as well as others. Leadership issues in the public service would always require time to heal. This is because of the change that taking place in the public service today. According to Batley 2006, it is important for the leaders to display leadership qualities worthy of emulation particularly to those younger recruits, as they have no one to look up to as a role model and mentor except their current leader.

There are various studies regarding service recovery performance in Western countries but the results have been inconsistent and failed to obtain conclusive findings that can be generalized in Malaysia. This study is one of the few studies in public HRM fields and we empirically select and engaged one most relevant public sector departments in East Malaysia to take part in this study. Drawing on one of the objectives, which is how inclusive leadership contributes to inclusiveness in public sector employees' performance through their engagement. This study is considered unique and different from past studies as we focus on the characteristic of inclusive leadership and its behavior and skills needed in improving the engagement and performance of employees. It also takes on the challenge of inclusion, with a specific focus on the traits and abilities necessary to become an inclusive leader. To do this, we applied the most important leadership challenges from Centre for Creative Leadership (CCL) to public sector leaders. In our review, we noticed that these characteristics were absolutely

relevant and could be applied to the state and local government leaders and officers for them to be able to work inclusively, leverage diversity for greater adaptability and achieve good results, particularly on the regulatory implementation of legislation, delivery of quality public service and project or programs for their leadership training.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Work Engagement

Work engagement represents employees' attitudes towards work and the extent of involvement to which they are willing to commit (Kahn, 1990). According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), the concept of work engagement can be best defined as the "*positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind which can be characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption*". These characteristics affect high levels of engagement that can drive talent retention, foster customer loyalty and improve organizational performance and stakeholder value. The authors further added employee engagement is a feeling of pride to be associated with the organization and serving at the highest possible. Accordingly, when engaged, employees feel a sense of involvement in their work mentally, intellectually and physically, and they are eager to exercise all of their dynamism at work (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Heuven, Demerouti, & Schaufeli, 2008). As stated by Truss et al. (2013), "*leader is responsible to motivate their staff to achieve a high level of commitment in attaining tasks and engage them to achieve set goals and initiatives in appropriate time*." Given these findings correlated with work engagement and in accordance with leadership theory, we, therefore call for more studies to be explored and attention for inclusive leadership challenge in human resource and leadership development programs. These insights on different leadership challenges are crucial and relevant for managers of diverse public sector in fostering employee work engagement.

2.2 Inclusive Leadership Challenge

Inclusive leaders appreciate employees' contributions and inspire innovation by involving employees sometimes at risk of being excluded from society. This style of leadership is always prepared to give up power, share responsibility and tap into the wisdom of the group to benefit everyone, leaders, employees, followers and society. These challenges opt to make public service leaders embody the leadership approach that appreciates diversity, recognized everyone's individual contribution and encourages full engagement with the aims to create, change and innovate whilst balancing everybody's needs. There is a further challenge for the public service leadership to ensure the continued relevance of the public service. As it has more employees, public service leaders have to contend with a highly regulated bureaucracy. For managing that huge number of employees, public service leaders would need to assess the challenges for their competencies and require rules and regulations to suit public accountability, integrity and preservation of public interest. These challenges are as follows:

2.2.1 Personal Leadership Challenge

According to Salleh and Sulaiman (2013), in order to develop better leaders in the future, it is important to know the qualities and competencies to face organizational challenges. The researcher has applied the ASTD model to Malaysian organizational settings and focuses on personal leadership competencies where it covers vision, critical thinking, self-confidence and assertiveness and effective communication skills. Thomas Friedman in his book "The world is Flat", argues that for the 21st-century leader to survive in a fast-changing world, he or she must have high personal concept skills of visioning, high touch skills of self –awareness, motivation, empathy, communication, good decision maker and delegation. Another element of personal leadership was interpersonal savvy, which had mentioned by Bill Gentry and the teams in their book "Building and maintaining solid working relationship", they argue that personal leadership with interpersonal savvy could build and maintain solid working relationships with superiors and colleagues. This element is considered most important as it helps the leaders to make the most out of everyday interactions using their best skills, empathy, sincerity and teamwork for behaviors that allow people to perceive the leader in the workplace and a firm knowledge of interpersonal savvy will allow the leader to best shape those perceptions to achieve greatest results. In other words, leaders demonstrate self-awareness of the positive qualities combined with specific actions to implement those qualities, which will lead to positive outcomes in how employees view and interact. Notably, the CCL study has also revealed that both civil and private sector employees cite personal leadership as their priority in leadership challenges. Additionally, Rose Lena and Siti Norlailasari (2007) in their research found leadership competencies in the public service and they concluded that leaders must be a team player, result-oriented, self-confident and have high integrity. They stressed that with these competencies, a leader must be able to communicate and display emotional maturity and the critical competencies are people skills, visionary leadership capability and skills in decision making. Based on the discussion above, it is hypothesized:

H1: Inclusive leaders with personal leadership challenges will be positively associated with employee work engagement.
H2: Personal leadership challenge offered is most likely the strongest predictor of employee work engagement.

2.2.2 Managing and Motivating Employees Challenge

Referring to Korn Ferry Institute, the researchers asserted that an inclusive leader differs from other leadership forms as he/she can masters the ability to inspire and motivate demographically different talent pools to leave behind the familiar, but outdated, and embrace the new and newly relevant in the midst of facing obstacles and change. An inclusive leader can foster service recovery performance through their cultivation of change value with "high touch skills" they had such as emotional intelligence skills, social skills, self-regulation, passion and motivation. Inclusive leaders drive employees'

hearts and minds to change (Stoyanova, 2017) by motivating, supporting and empowering them to challenge the status quo of public services. An inclusive leader empowers employees by enhancing their confidence in their ability to improve public service as well as recover complaining citizens (Lindblom et al., 2016). Beyond employees seeing meaning and nobility in their effort and work, the inclusive leader must show passion for achieving the strategic direction and must have the energy to energise the organization so that the employee supports him (Heller, 2001). Based on the elaborated findings above it is hypothesized that:

H3: Inclusive leader managing and motivating employees' challenges will be positively associated with employee work engagement.

2.2.3 Building and Leading Teams Challenge

Building and leading a team and teamwork is crucial, it became a fundamental tool and context for practice of leadership. According to Denis et al. (2012), sharing leadership from team effectiveness occurs when there is mutual leadership in the group and the team members are leading each other. Bucie et al. (2010) found that the leadership style used when leading a team or group may affect cohesion, interaction, reaction and learning outcomes of the members. Yukl (2013) further described a leader can have an impact on the coordination of work activities, teamwork maintenance, the shared beliefs and values of members, reciprocal trust, collaboration, motivation among members to achieve objectives and the selection of the strategies and objectives to be pursued. As such, teamwork challenge has exerted a direct influence on the performance of organizations. Furthermore, it can help organizations to rectify problems more precisely, and provide solutions and better ways to engage employees in the organization. Another study in public health, banking and life insurance industries found that teamwork influences positively service recovery performance (Ashill et al., 2005; Kirkbir and Cengiz, 2007; Piaralal et al., 2012). With the substantial review above, we hence formulate the final hypotheses as:

H4: Inclusive leader with building and leading team challenges will be positively associated with employee work engagement.

3. Material and Methods

3.1 Research Design

An analytical cross-sectional survey design was used in this study. The reason is as the nature of this study seeks to gather data from a group of subjects at only one point in time (Schmidt & Brown, 2019). Moreover, the main purpose of the study is to measure the association between variables i.e. roles of inclusive leadership challenges on employee work engagement in the proposed conceptual model below:
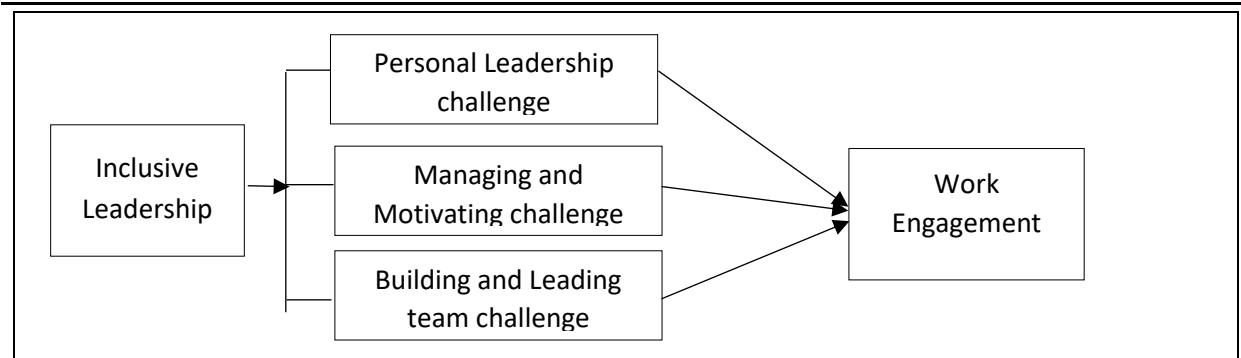
Figure 1: Proposed Conceptual Model: Perceived inclusive leadership challenges on work engagement in the public sector

3.2 Population and Sample

The population of this study were employees from Land and Survey Department, a local government department in Sarawak. The Department of Lands and Surveys was set up in 1918 and entrusted with the role to administer land and carry out cadastral surveys. It has four core branches, namely Land, Survey, Planning and Valuation and six supporting branches. The department has offices in all 12 divisions Statewide. For the purpose of testing the conceptual model of this study, we were advised by the management of L&S Department to select four divisions namely Serian, Sarikei, Sibu and Kapit. Employees and their managers of these four divisions were engaged in completing questionnaire surveys. We gained permission and support from the top management for data collection. A probability sampling technique was used, the selection of the sample being on the basis of simple random sampling. Data provided from Human Resource Unit showing the total number of employees from the four selected divisions were 620. The breakdown numbers of employees from each division were: Serian (78 employees), Sarikei (200 employees), Sibu (220 employees) and Kapit (122 employees). After cross-checked and final confirmation, we agreed on 650 sets of questionnaires distributed for all four divisions. The questionnaires were administered in a professional way and with conscientiousness due to the data collected being subject to the privacy of the civil servants and Covid-19 pandemic outbreak. Of these, 240 respondents were considered for analysis, ignoring some non-response. This sample size of 240 was selected to represent the total population found to be adequate. The assurance of challenge size was founded on Krejcie and Morgan's table where a sample size of 240 is acceptable and where the given population of 600 to 650, a sample size of 234 to 242 would be needed to represent a cross-section of the population.

3.3 Measurement Instrument

The researcher used a quantitative approach and assisted with SPSS version 26. A structured questionnaire was designed to elicit all responses perceived on different aspects of inclusive leadership challenges on work engagement. Independent variables used in the extant literature on the association of work engagement were inclusive leadership challenges which include personal leadership challenges, managing and

motivating employees challenges and building and leading team challenges. All of these leadership challenges variables were well reviewed and accepted by the management of Land and Survey Department in that four divisions due to the significance and reciprocal relation to the other variables (i.e. work engagement) used in this study. As this study is the first of its kind, a simple pilot test has been performed to obtain in-depth confirmatory results. The researcher used similar questionnaires randomly given to the employees of Land and Survey from different divisions. The data obtained were analyzed and a reliability test was carried out. The internal consistency found from the reliability test was high. The questionnaires consist of 5 questions for work engagement, 14 questions for inclusive leadership challenges (5 questions for personal leadership, 5 questions for managing and motivating employees, and 4 questions for building and leading teams). All of the 14 questions developed for inclusive leadership were in line with the scope of CCL resources for leadership challenges categories. The variables items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree).* Instead of another scale to achieve a higher percentage of answers (Babakus et al., 2003). Notably, this method can be employed for model-based inference with the assumption that the regression model is exactly specified (Fricker, 2006). As a result, the proposed conceptual model in this study is based on important variables for a regression model which is considered specific.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Reliability Analysis
Hair et al. (1998) pointed out that Cronbach's α was used to determine the reliabilities of the utilized scales and hence the value of α should be above 0.7. Table 1 shows the psychometric properties for the reliability of the study which were statistically assessed through conducting reliability analysis and evaluating Cronbach's coefficient α. The determinants representing leadership challenges have an acceptable α, personal leadership challenge with $\alpha = 0.879$; managing and motivating challenge with $\alpha = 0.864$; building and leading team challenge with $\alpha = 0.837$ and work engagement with $\alpha = 0.839$. The overall Cronbach's α for all variables with 20 items assessed in this study was 0.946, indicating the level of acceptance was very high, and the responses to the various items match well i.e., highly correlated. Moreover, each individual question used was correlated with every other question, thus, it's proven that the internal consistency was high. From Table 1, the result of the reliability test with the value of Cronbach's Alpha of all four variables indicates high reliability. The value indicates the questionnaire used in this study was reliable due to the fact that the closer the value to 1, the more reliable the questionnaire. Hence, it is concluded that all four variables have reliability and are acceptable for further analysis.

Table 1: Reliability statistics of the leadership challenges

No	Variable	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	Items
1	Personal Leadership	.879	5
2	Managing and Motivating	.864	5
3	Building and Leading Team	.837	4
4	Work Engagement	.839	6

Source: Author.

4.2 Frequency Analysis

The study collected a few demographic data from the respondents which include gender, age, education level, experience, ethnicity, job position and division in public service. A summary of the demographic information is given in Table 2. Among the respondents, around 57.9 percent were male and 42.1 percent were female. Most of the respondents were in the 31-40 years age group, which comprises around 54.2 percent of total respondents. In terms of educational level, most of the respondents had SPM / STPM qualifications with 37.5 percent followed by Diploma holders with 29.6 percent. About 29.2 percent of respondents had a bachelor's degree and the remaining 3.8 percent comprised other qualifications. In the case of working experience, the majority of respondents (45.8 percent) have been working for 6-10 years in the current organization. On the other hand, 25 percent of the respondents have been working between 2-5 years. About 22.9 percent of respondents have been working for more than 10 years and only 6.3 percent those serving less than 2 years. As for ethnicity, most of the respondents were Iban ethnic with 38.8 percent, followed by Chinese ethnicity which consists of 22.1 percent. The remaining 18.3 percent and 20.8 percent were Malay ethnic and other ethnic respectively. On job position, 44.2 percent of the respondents were assistant officers, followed by 35.4 percent of administrative officers. Respondents who were an officer comprised around 14.6 percent of total respondents. While the remaining 1.7 percent and 4.2 percent were HOD and other positions respectively. Respondents came from four divisions which comprised of Sarikei with 27.5 percent, Sibu division with 25.8 percent, Serian division with 23.8 percent and Kapit division with 22.9 percent of total respondents.

Table 2: Summary of the respondent according to their profile

Category	Frequency	%	Category	Frequency	%
Gender			**Education level**		
Male	139	57.9	SPM/STPM	90	37.5
Female	101	42.1	Diploma	71	29.6
Age			Degree	70	29.2
21 – 30 years	46	19.2	Others	9	3.8
31 – 40 years	130	54.2	**Ethnicity**		
>40 years	64	26.7	Malay	44	18.3
Experience			Iban	93	38.8
<2 years	15	6.3	Chinese	53	22.1
2–5 years	60	25.0	Others	50	20.8
6–10 years	110	45.8	**Division**		

>10 years	55	22.9	Serian	57	23.8
Job Position			Sarikei	66	27.5
Admin officer	85	35.4	Sibu	62	25.8
Assistant officer	106	44.2	Kapit	55	22.9
Officer	35	14.6			
HOD	4	1.7			
Others	10	4.2			

4.3 Pearson Correlation

Table 3 below highlights the relationship between the independent variables represented by inclusive leadership challenges with the dependent variable of work engagement. The study measured by Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. It's agreed that correlation of 1.0 means that there is a perfect relationship between the variables regardless of the direction of the relationship. The closer the r value to 1.0 indicate that employees agreed and perceived positively the leadership challenges possessed by their leaders or managers in their work engagement. The r value ranged from (0.689-0828, $p <$ .05) representing a moderate to a strong relationship (Evans, 1996) and hence, the results show that the independent variables were statistically significantly correlated with work engagement. Those hypotheses accepted were: Personal leadership challenge, $r = .698$, managing and motivating challenge, $r = .688$ and building and leading team, $r = .655$. From Table 4, it is evident that personal leadership challenge is most significant and highly correlated to employee work engagement.

Table 3: Pearson correlation analysis between variables studied

Variable	1	2	3	4
R				
1	1	.828*	.689*	.698*
2	.828*	1	.776*	.688*
3	.689*	.776*	1	.655*
4	.698*	.688*	.655*	1

Note: 1 = Personal Leadership Challenge, 2 = Managing & Motivating Challenge, 3 = Building & Leading Team Challenge, 4 = Work Engagement

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

A multiple regression analysis was also conducted in addition to Pearson Correlation analysis above to predict employee work engagement based on individual leadership challenges as determinants. This is to support and strengthen the result of Pearson Correlation analysis on the relationship between the predictors and dependent variable. A significance value of 0.000 indicates there is a significant difference among the mean scores of the dependent variable because the score is less than 0.05 (Pallant, 2007). The Durbin Watson coefficient was tested to be within the acceptable limits of 1.5 to 2.5. Based on the multiple regression output to test between personal leadership challenge variable and work engagement, the variables tested resulted in a statistically significant correlation (p<0.05) as in Table 6. The regression test demonstrated a good inference with

R^2 of 0.488. This highlighted that 48 percent of the variation in work engagement can be explained by personal leadership challenges. The regression analysis demonstrated that the tested variable the tested variables were statistically significant at p<0.05 – 95 percent degree of confidence. The β value (standardized coefficient) of personal leadership challenge (β = 0.597) showed that the personal leadership variable was positively associated with work engagement. The t-value of 15.05, which was greater than 2 shows greater confidence in the coefficient as a predictor. Hence, the findings supported the person correlation analysis on *H1*.

From the output of multiple regression to test the direct association between managing and motivating challenges and work engagement, the output of multiple regression on Table 7, the model tested significant with (p<0.05), F = 214.096. The regression test demonstrated a good inference with R^2 of 0.474. This highlighted that 47 percent of the variation in work engagement can be explained by managing and motivating challenges. The regression analysis showed that the following tested variables were statistically significant at p<0.05 – 95 percent degree of confidence. The β value (standardized coefficient) of managing and motivating challenge (β = 0.575) showed that the managing and motivating variable was positively associated with work engagement. The t-value of 14.63, which was greater than 2 shows greater confidence in the coefficient as a predictor. Hence, the findings also supported the person correlation analysis on *H3.*

Meanwhile, Table 8 reveals the output of multiple regression to test the direct association between building and leading team challenges and work engagement. The model tested significant with (p<0.05), F = 179.028. The regression test presented a good inference with R^2 of 0.429. This highlighted that 42 percent of the variation in work engagement can be explained by building and leading team challenges. The regression analysis showed that the following tested variables were statistically significant at p<0.05 – 95 percent degree of confidence. The β value (standardized coefficient) of building and leading team challenge (β=0.518) showed that the variable was positively associated with work engagement. The t-value of 13.38, which was greater than 2 shows greater confidence in the coefficient as a predictor. Therefore, these findings supported the person correlation analysis on *H4.*

On the overall regression summary, Table 9 exposes the prevalence of substantial relationships of all variables. It displayed that personal leadership challenge and building and leading team challenge demonstrated to be the most associated with employee work engagement (personal leadership challenge, β = .316, t = 4.732, p <0.05 and building and leading team challenge, β = .206, t = 3.745, p < 0.05), while managing and motivating challenge was moderately associated and with β = .150, t = 1.996. The Standardized Coefficients (β) show that the personal leadership challenge has the largest absolute value, 0.370, followed by the building and leading team challenge, 0.261 and the managing and motivating challenge, = 0.179. This suggests that personal leadership challenge is the strongest predictor of work engagement in civil service. Hence, hypothesis 2 is accepted. Personal leadership challenge offered is most likely the strongest predictor of employee work engagement.

Table 6: Multiple Regressions for Personal Leadership Challenge

	Work engagement	
Predictor variable	*β*	*t*-value
Personal leadership challenge	0.597	15.05*
F-Value	226.588	
Durbin Watson	1.655	
R²	0.488*	
Adjusted *R²*	0.486*	
Note: ***p<0.05		

Table 7: Multiple Regressions for Managing and Motivating Challenge

	Work engagement	
Predictor variable	*β*	*t*-value
Managing and motivating challenge	0.575	14.63*
F-Value	214.096	
Durbin Watson	1.688	
R²	0.474*	
Adjusted *R²*	0.471*	
Note: ***p<0.05		

Table 8: Multiple Regressions for Building and Leading Team Challenge

	Work engagement	
Predictor variable	*β*	*t*-value
Building and leading team challenge	0.518	13.38*
F-Value	179.028	
Durbin Watson	1.634	
R²	0.429*	
Adjusted *R²*	0.427*	
Note: ***p<0.05		

Table 9: Relative Contribution of Leadership challenges
(*Personal leadership, Managing and motivating, Building and leading team*)
as independent variables and work engagement as a dependent variable

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	**Std. Error**	**Beta (β)**		
1	(Constant)	1.468	.157		9.369	.000
	Personal Leadership	.316	.067	.370	4.732	.000*
	Managing & Motivating	.150	.075	.179	1.996	.047
	Building & Leading Team	.206	.055	.261	3.745	.000*

*significant level is at .05 ($p < .05$).

Moreover, in Table 10 of the model summary, A signification equation was F (97.267) = 34.591 p <0.05, with $R²$ value of 0.553 illustrated the variance in the dependent variable (employee work engagement) explained in the model as 55 percent. The value explained that 55% of the variability observed in the target variable is explained by the regression model in this study whereas the remaining 45% was unexplained. In this study, it can be

concluded that among three independent variables, the personal leadership challenge played the most influential role in deriving employee work engagement in civil service. This was supported based on the highest *t*-value and beta score as compared to other independent variables used in this study.

Table 10: Model Summary of correlation between
Personal leadership challenge, Managing & motivating, Building &
leading team (independent variables) and Work engagement (dependent variable)

Model	R	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Std. Error of the Estimate	R^2 change	*F* change
1	.744ᵃ	.553	.547	.344	.553	97.267
a. Predictors: (Constant), Personal leadership challenge, Managing & motivating, Building & leading team						
b. dependent variable: Work Engagement						

4.5 Discussion

This study aimed to contribute to measuring and solving the issue of engagement and contribution by employees towards work commitment at Land and Survey, Sarawak and the decline in the level of engagement from employees in selected branches that subsequently affects their job performance. Notably, this study established that a relationship between inclusive leadership challenges and employee work engagement does exist. In this study, the researcher examined the extent to which inclusive leadership challenges were perceived and successfully influence employee work engagement. As hypothesized, inclusive leadership challenges were positively associated with employee work engagement. That is, employees perceive their work engagement as high when the leaders they work with equip and possess themselves with that leadership challenges.

This study introduced a more conclusive and structured trend of investigation, derived and carried out in which there is more focus on finding the relationship that affects both leadership and employees' work engagement. This is crucial to the fact that if the leaders at each departmental showing excellence leadership skills in managing day-to-day operations, then their employees would have shown a great level of commitment and work engagement and this definitely would lead to the improvement of the service offered by Land and Survey as highlighted in Government Transformation Programme (GTP). All of these would require skilful leaders agile to the changes and embrace their employees with a new way of doing things. The findings will not only help practicing leaders understand what they and others are going through, but also inform training and development initiatives to ensure that developmental opportunities are appropriately targeted. The discussion which ensues provides further overviews into the above and frequency analysis of how employees in the public service perceived the leadership challenges in their work engagement.

4.5.1 Perceived Inclusive Leadership Challenges

a. Personal Leadership Challenge

The average mean value of 3.94 (Maximum = 5) shows that employees at Land and Survey Department perceive personal leadership challenges as critical to their work engagement. Employees believed that if leaders want to make things happen and energise others, they must focus attention on the needs of the organization and the people in the organization by demonstrating their skills and experiences, taking decisive action and being able to solve problems in complex situations. Likewise, employees in the public service would be more engaged in their work because they are empowered to realize the leaders, they worked with were able to delegate tasks, handle stress, prioritize and persuade them on important issues in the organization. This is in line with research done by Opportunity Now and Shapiro Consulting (2015) stating that when employees work with and for an inclusive leader who had a higher level of cognitive skills, there are high impact benefits, greater engagement and loyalty, and moreover greater motivation from employees.

b. Managing and Motivating Employees' Challenge

An average mean value of 3.97 (Maximum = 5) was obtained. This proves that employees at Land and Survey Department perceive managing and motivating employee challenges as essential in organizational daily operations. They also pointed out that while leaders focus on production, they must demonstrate behaviours that tap into interpersonal concerns like building and maintaining relationships by inspiring others, developing others and motivating others. Cited from the research done by the Centre for Creative Leadership on the challenges leaders face around the world in 2016, quote that motivating employees was the biggest leadership challenge to some managers as they believed that developing relationships with others is a huge challenge where they have to take an active role in mentoring, coaching and developing others. Indeed, leaders must try to meet the differing needs of the many employees with whom they work daily. Findings revealed that employees agreed and expect their leaders could encourage them to overcome work challenges, fairly treat, respond to their problems, often provide up-to-date information and encourage them to build networks and relationships. Moreover, this finding was also supported by Korn Ferry Institute for the research carried out in 2019 on inclusive leadership as it said leaders who were able to manage and motivate employees are called change leaders. This is because a change leader masters the ability to inspire and motivate people in a dynamic environment with unprecedented diverse teams like in Land and Survey Department.

c. Building and Leading Team Challenge

An average mean value of 3.89 (Maximum = 5) was obtained. This illustrates that employees at Land and Survey Department are concerned about the leadership quality and competencies of their leader to overcome this type of challenge in which they agreed that the leader must demonstrate the will to lead which could empower them into

functioning and productive team for accomplishing the organization's strategies. Aside from that, employees also expect that leader they worked with could execute things or tasks effectively such as having the foresight and unrelenting determination to execute the strategic direction, strategies and plan of the organization to achieve organizational goals. As pointed out, inclusive leaders consider team members' differences and support their belongingness to facilitate each team member's contribution, rather than emphasize the need to assimilate toward collective needs or goals (Randel et at., 2018)

4.5.2 Inclusive Leadership Challenges and Work Engagement

Depicted from the results of Pearson Correlation Analysis suggested that personal leadership challenge is the most influential and positively correlated with employee work engagement followed by managing and motivating challenge, building and leading team challenge. The researcher further performed Multiple Regression and the outcome revealed that two predictor challenges were strongly significant in this analysis which were personal leadership challenges and building and leading team challenges. On overall employee work engagement, the average mean value of 4.11 (Maximum = 5) indicates that employees at Land and Survey Department perceived those three challenges proposed in this study were reliable and crucial in today's global, mobile, virtual and dynamic workplace in which organizations operate in a diverse environment. As presented in this study, employees foresee their leaders to be equipped with these challenges for becoming role model leaders who can inspire, coach and act as a mentor. Apart from being honest and fair and equitable in their outlook, they should also be proactive, transparent, caring and goal-focused. By having all of these could showcase employees with high energy, immersion and focus on jobs and becoming high achievers with compassion for his/her jobs and roles. This was supported by previous empirical studies (Powell, 1995) as they discovered that those in leadership roles must be high in self-motivation and discipline. They should anticipate future challenges, catalyze the organization, build staff commitment, allow others to make a change and remain true to the goal. With this, we could generate that real inclusive leadership is about influence and not about position, it immensely influences subordinates. Randel et al. (2018) stressed that inclusive leadership is seen as necessary to facilitate and support belongingness and uniqueness. He emphasized the need for this type of leadership style in considering, facilitating and developing team members to support their belongingness.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

It is clearly understood that personal leadership challenge plays a vital role in improving employee work engagement. Becoming an inclusive leader is not about completing a to-do list. It is an invitation to challenge and develop an attitude that fully accepts others with all their strengths and weaknesses, thereby empowering them to take a step forward. Inclusive leaders observe and sense the context around them and reflect on the different decisions that have been made. They are willing to learn and take the challenge

themselves to go the extra mile to become inclusive. As such, this study provides an inspirational approach and crucial insights into leadership challenges in inclusive leaders' behavior. This study has added to the understanding of what fosters employee work engagement, offering both theoretical and practical implications for engagement and leadership. Study findings indicated support for a new theoretical model regarding how managers / HOD mentoring and fostering employee engagement. Most notably, the study findings show that all of the three independent variables (personal leadership challenge, managing and motivating challenge, building and leading challenge) were all positive and significant predictors of work engagement indicating that employees in Land and Survey Department believed that inclusive managers/HOD are more likely to be energetic and dedicated serve to foster engagement. This is also in line with previous studies conducted on the ten local governments from every 24 districts in Ho Chi Minh City of Vietnam (Tuan & Thao, 2017).

Secondly, this study demonstrates the positive social exchange between managers/HOD strongly influences employees' work engagement. The two dimensions of quality which were significantly associated with inclusiveness in leadership and provides the strongest connection. These findings have implications for the public sector and administrative leaders mostly in government sectors that attempt to enhance social exchanges with their subordinates. Thirdly, this study was to determine which leadership challenge is the strongest predictor of work engagement and the outcomes reveal that personal leadership challenge was the strongest predictor of employee work engagement among employees at Land and Survey, Sarawak. This result agreed with other researchers' results such as Tammy & Kimberly (2006) and Antonalis et al. (2016) who said that quality leadership is essential to developing trust and enhancing an individual's attitude toward his or her job. Visionary and articulate leaders' trustworthiness with people skills can be manifested and demonstrated to employees and used for achieving organizational goals.

Finally, the Human Resource Department could emphasize its talent management strategy on attracting and developing and retaining inclusive leaders which in the long term could impact the entire organizational change and build a mutual corporation between employees and employer. For this, the human resource has to evaluate the knowledge of the leaders, for instance on his/her "high touch" skills, moreover, effective leaders in public services are distinguished by a high degree of emotional intelligence which means IQ and technical and analytical skills are important. Some leaders or managers may not have the knowledge of the importance of engaging employees in the organization, therefore, it is essential to train the leaders on the art of making employees feel more engaged with their work, love their job, and work in full potential and foster a greater sense of attachment and belonging at everywhere whenever they were transferred and attached to. Also, to be a great inclusive leader in the public service one would also need to invest in developing people, especially leaders. Normally this would require coaching and mentoring potential great leaders for becoming future leaders. In doing so, succession planning would be on the management agenda where existing great

leaders should spend time developing and guiding those behind them. As the management realized that a good leader is one who can ensure that there is continued excellence long after he/she has left the organization. Thus, continuous development of the leaders should at a higher priority, as this will affect directly the public sector accountability. All departmental leaders need to guide the employees to be on the right path, for instance by applying various sets of leadership styles during performing and executing work in a different situation or environment.

Last but not least, as the government is heading toward becoming a developed nation, the functions of leaders are needed to perform all the Government Transformation Programme and the Economic Transformation Programme, inclusive leaders have a wider perspective which can exert a greater influence on a social and environmental level by acknowledging and taking into account the interconnectedness of the various systems around them, which means that inclusive leaders are able to fulfil the goals and meet the needs of the organization. Thus, it will ensure national prosperity and people's well-being. This study will assist the policymakers to ensure better integrity and quality of leadership management to improve efficiency in the public sector.

5.1 Future Research Direction

The research presents some limitations that should be considered. The first limitation is on the method used is that this study is based on 240 respondents collected through simple random sampling only into four branches (Serian, Sarikei, Sibu, Kapit). In future, larger samples from all branches could be done for generalisation of better results. Secondly, research in the future could use both quantitative and qualitative research methodology to elicit more in-depth and sufficient information both from the employees and leaders pertaining to the area of this study. This is certainly in need of a deeper understanding of how individual characteristics which were the managers/HOD impact work engagement and the interaction of situational factors and the individual difference could be broadly expanded. Lastly, the sample drawn for this study was from Land and Survey Department. Thus, generalizing findings to other government departments or units is therefore limited. Future researchers are encouraged to expand into other organizational antecedents on leadership challenges and connect them with service recovery performance (SRP), service-oriented Human Resource Management to be considered and another organizational mechanisms.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The author can assure, and confidently express that no conflicts of interest possibly linked with this research, and there has been no significant financial aid received for this study, authorship and publication that could have influenced the study's outcome. The author affirms that this research is original and has not been published in the past or elsewhere.

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