Examining Leadership-Induced Psychosocial Hazards: A Qualitative Case Study on the Impacts among Academics

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Abstract

Leadership profoundly influences the well-being of employees across various domains, including their physical, emotional, and psychological states. This qualitative inquiry delves into the interplay between leadership styles and psychosocial hazards within private research-focused universities. This study extracts nuanced insights into the leadership dynamics prevalent in their academic environments through standardised open-ended interviews with seventeen academics. Utilising the Atlas.ti software for analysis, thematic examination revealed eight distinct codes characterising detrimental leadership typologies: self-serving, control-oriented, unempathetic, biased & favoritist, narcissistic, authoritarian, misleading, and weak & indecisive leaders. These findings illuminate the profound psychological and social repercussions of such leadership styles within academia, emphasising the imperative for institutional safeguards to mitigate their adverse effects. The study enriches the ongoing discourse on leadership in higher education and advocates for a critical reevaluation of leadership practices to cultivate a more supportive and productive academic milieu.

Keywords: *psychosocial hazards experience, stress, leadership, academics, research universities, qualitative research*

Introduction

Leadership is an important topic among behavioural scientists and management researchers, and it significantly impacts quality management practices in institutions. The type of leadership that is necessary for quality management practice. Top management's attributes are evaluated differently from transactional and transformational leadership, and it is crucial to study the relationship between different leadership styles and quality management practices in various cultural setups. In general, leadership is vital because it sets the direction, motivates people, and helps to achieve goals effectively and efficiently. Good leadership can inspire and empower people to work towards a common goal, while poor leadership can lead to confusion, conflict, and inefficiency (Naji, Isha, Alazzani, Brough, et al., 2022; Saif et al., 2019)

Psychosocial hazards are workplace hazards that can affect an employee's mental and emotional well-being. They are negative experiences that employees face when dealing with any possible factors that could pose a severe threat to their psychological, physiological, and social well-being, adversely affecting their work performance (*Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Report*, 2008; ILO, 2019) (Kalid et al., 2024; Naji et al., 2024; Van Daele, 2008; Wadsworth & Walters, 2019). These hazards can include factors such as job strain, workplace violence, bullying, and harassment. Exposure to psychosocial hazards can lead to adverse outcomes such as stress, anxiety, depression, and burnout. Employers need to identify and address psychosocial hazards in the workplace to promote a healthy and safe work environment for employees (Isha et al., 2023; Saleem, Isha, Awan, et al., 2022). This can be done through risk assessments, training programs, and policies and procedures that address psychosocial hazards (Oakman et al., 2022).

The relationship between leadership and psychosocial hazards in organisations has been highlighted in several studies. For instance, a study conducted among workers in hazardous environments at poultry feed mills revealed that leadership quality moderated the relationship between work organisation and job content and workers' psychological health factors, indicating the importance of leadership in mitigating psychosocial hazards (Naji et al., 2021; Saleem, Isha, Benson, et al., 2022). Furthermore, a study on psychosocial safety climate (PSC) demonstrated that team leaders play a crucial role in increasing and converging PSC perceptions in a team, thereby influencing employees' psychological health and safety (Loh et al., 2021; Naji,

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Isha, Alazzani, Saleem, et al., 2022). These findings underscore the importance of effective leadership in addressing psychosocial hazards within organisations.

The psychosocial hazards theoretical framework of this research is based on (Cox & Griffiths, 2005), framework, which identifies ten psychosocial hazards: Workload & Work Pace, Task Design, Work Schedule, Organizational Culture & Function, Interpersonal Relationship, Role in Organisation, Decision Latitude, Career Development and, Home Interface (Golden, 2013). Although leadership is a critical component of organisational culture, this research reveals leadership as a distinct theme of a newly emerged psychosocial hazard among academics (Alzoraiki et al., 2023). The gravity of this specific issue is underscored by the findings, with most academics participating in the research expressing concerns related to leadership. The impact of leadership on the well-being, job satisfaction, and overall experiences of academics cannot be understated. The emergence of leadership as a distinct theme underscores its significant role and distinct impact on academics' psychosocial well-being. This recognition highlights the significance of effective leadership in promoting a supportive and conducive work environment and the potential hazards that can arise when leadership is lacking or problematic.

The study aims to unravel the intricate dynamics and implications associated with leadership within the context of psychosocial factors. By narrowing the focus to this thematic dimension, the study seeks to contribute valuable insights into how leadership styles, practices, and dynamics may impact the psychosocial well-being of individuals in various settings. This deliberate emphasis on the Leadership theme allows for a nuanced exploration, providing a comprehensive understanding of its significance and implications in the broader landscape of psychosocial hazards.

The Motivation of this Study

This case study is motivated by the critical role leadership plays in influencing employee well-being, particularly within private research-focused universities in Malaysia. Research indicates that leadership styles can significantly impact employees' physical, emotional, and psychological states. This qualitative investigation seeks to delve deeper into the psychosocial hazards initiated by various leadership styles within academia, specifically private research-focused universities. Additionally, the study is motivated by the unique focus on leadership as a distinct theme within the realm of psychosocial hazards among academics, unravelling intricate dynamics and implications associated with leadership. This deliberate emphasis allows for a nuanced exploration, providing a comprehensive understanding of the significance and implications of leadership in the broader landscape of psychosocial hazards.

Method

Research Design

This qualitative study utilised a multi-case research approach due to the depth and empirical richness that data from various cases can provide (Yin, 1994), especially in illustrating diverse perspectives of academics' psychosocial hazards experienced when dealing with leadership at work. This approach is particularly pertinent given the psychological aspect of the research (Creswell et al., 2007; Johnson, 1996). The investigation centres around the experiences of psychosocial hazards among academic professionals at two private, research-focused universities in Malaysia, termed University X and University Y, aiming to gain comprehensive insights into this phenomenon. In this research, in-depth interviews were conducted to gather detailed and nuanced data on the academics' psychosocial hazard experiences. These open-ended interviews enabled a thorough exploration of the participants' perspectives and experiences (Dudwick et al., 2006). Through this method, the study aimed to unveil the intricacies of the psychosocial hazards of leadership experienced by academics in the unique context of Malaysian private research universities.

Research Participants

In this study, the sampling approach focused on selecting academics from two specific institutions, University X and University Y, using purposive sampling methods to choose the participants. Criterion sampling indicates the private universities, as seen in the criteria in Table 1. This research focused on academics from private universities in Malaysia that have been positioning research as the central agenda in their universities' direction. The universities were determined based on their active participation in international recognitions in the Times Higher Education World Ranking and Quacquarelli Symonds (QS) Ranking assessments. Among twenty top private universities in Malaysia that have been actively involved in research activities and engagements, two universities were identified as the private research-focused universities in this research. Both universities were ranked below 1000 places in the Times Higher Education Ranking in 2023 and the QS Ranking in 2023. These two universities have actively participated in the Times Higher Education World Ranking and QS Ranking assessments since 2018 and 2019, respectively. They are both classified as research-focused universities, and research initiatives and aspirations are central to the performance requirements set by the management of these two private universities to reflect the standards put forth by the MoHE (Malaysia, 2013).

Table 1: Evaluation Criteria for Selected World Education Rankings

Evaluation Criteria for World Education Ranking				
	Times Higher Education Ranking Source: https://www.timeshighereducation.com/sites/default/files/breaking_news_files/the_2023_world_university_rankings_methodology.pdf		QS Ranking Source: https://support.qs.com/hc/en-gb/articles/4405955370898-QS-World-University-Rankings	
Pillar	**Metric**	**% Weighting**	**Metric**	**% Weighting**
Teaching	Reputation Survey Academic Staff-to-Student Ratio Doctorates Awarded-to-Bachelor's Degrees Awarded Ratio Doctorates Awarded-to-Academic Staff Ratio Institutional Income	30.00	Academic Reputation Faculty-Student Ratio Employer Reputation	40.0 20.0 10.0
Research	Reputation survey Research Income Research Productivity	30.0		
Citations	Citations	30.0	Citations Per Faculty	20.0
International Outlook	Proportion of International Students Proportion of International Staff International Collaboration	7.50	International Faculty Ratio International Student Ratio	5.0 5.0
Industry Income	Industry Income	2.50		
TOTAL		**100.00**	**TOTAL**	**100.00**

Data Collection

A mixed-purposeful sampling strategy was utilised to achieve triangulation and adaptability and to meet the diverse requirements of stakeholders participating in this research (Patton, 2002). Pseudonyms were

allocated to all 17 participants to safeguard anonymity and confidentiality. Each interview was meticulously recorded, and the corresponding audio files were labelled with the assigned pseudonyms to uphold confidentiality. These files were securely stored and limited in accessibility exclusively to the principal investigator, ensuring the preservation of participants' privacy (Stuckey, 2014). Before the primary data collection phase commenced, a pilot test involving two distinct sample groups was conducted in January 2022. This initial step was crucial in refining the interview techniques and questions, ensuring their clarity, effectiveness, and ability to extract the necessary information. The pilot test allowed researchers to assess the technical aspects of the interviews, thereby preparing the groundwork for the actual data collection phase. The first primary interview (Sample 1) unfolded in March 2022, marking the initiation of a thorough and enlightening journey into data gathering. Following this, the final interview (Sample 17) took place in October 2022, bringing the research phase to a close. This timeline underscores the extended period dedicated to gathering data, emphasising the depth and breadth of the research conducted.

Ethical Issues

Safeguarding the privacy and confidentiality of participants remained a paramount concern across all phases of the study, encompassing data collection, analysis, and reporting. All personal identifiers were deliberately withheld to maintain anonymity. Before the commencement of interview sessions, explicit informed consent was obtained from each participant. Each participant received an Explanatory Statement and an Informed Consent form, ensuring they were fully apprised and willingly consented before engaging in the study.

Data Management and Analysis Tool

The examination of the data gathered from the academic participants was conducted with precision, adhering to an organised methodology for identifying themes and codes (Creswell et al., 2007) that surfaced from repeated and consistent terms, expressions, or concepts noted during the interviews. To ensure the authenticity and validity of the data, transcriptions of the interviews were shared with all participants for verification before the analysis commenced. The confirmed data were then organised and analysed using the qualitative data management software ATLAS.ti Version 23.0.1.

Results

Eight crucial codes were identified within the Leadership theme, as illustrated in Figure 1. These essential codes signify fundamental principles or attributes that contribute to effective leadership, providing foundational insights into understanding leadership dynamics and practices among university academics.

Figure 1: Identified Codes for the Leadership Theme
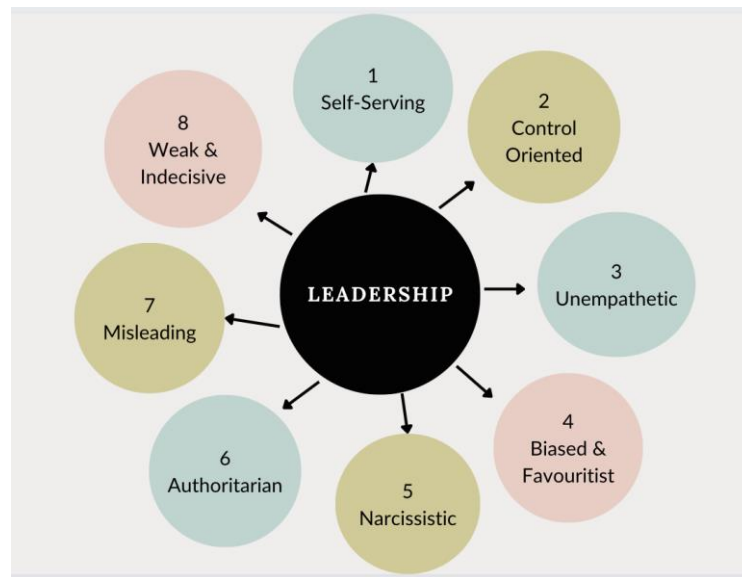
The parts of the story from the participants' experience dealing with leaders at their universities are presented in the following narratives in Table 2:

Table 2: Identified Codes & Quotations

Theme: Leadership	
Code	**Quotations**
Self-Serving Leaders	In this university, from what I can see, there are always new things that want to be implemented every year, contributing to certain people's KPI (Taufiq put quote and unquote fingers). But over here, they pressure us on research, consultancy, and teaching; we will die (mati la). They pressure us to ensure that we fulfil the requirements in KPI, and the management only thinks about themselves (syok sendiri). The management has always been like that, thinking only about themselves; they did not bother the ones down here (orang bawah). Unfortunately, now it's worse; they start to encroach on people and subordinates, and they pressure us, pressure, pressure, simply to fulfil their KPI. These people have different KPIs based on their positions here: DVCA has its own KPI, DVCRI has its own KPI, and VC has its own KPI. So, based on that, everyone at the top is putting pressure on the academics. Everybody on top has their agenda. Taufiq
Control-Oriented Leaders	I think this is part of Malaysian culture, which I believe is not professional. You only do what the boss wants; you must follow whatever the boss likes and wants; a yes-man culture, when somebody is too long in the position, this is what happens: the boss is comfortable with the way he runs things, so they do not want to have any changes. It occurs here for people who do not have a position. When they speak up, they can be blacklisted. That's not professional because, as a leader, you have mixed personal and professional judgments. Because you do not want people who have different ideas from you, not professional, not the right way. Alex

Unempathetic Leaders	People who charted the requirements might be people from a different era with different commitments at that time. So, they don't quite understand what academics are going through now. Jess Over here, it is so common that if we voice our dissatisfaction or grievances, they only fall on deaf ears. Dave
Biased & Favoritist Leaders	I can see that different treatments are being given if you are a staff member of this university compared to the ones the parent company directly hires. Still, we are so used to being treated like stepchildren here. Mia They have their preference and pre-judgment, favouritism, and quota to give good ratings to their favourite ones, regardless. They only rated highly the ones who were visible to them. They only rated highly the ones who were visible to them. Mimi
Narcissistic Leaders	These top people sometimes say, "You have to be grateful that at least you have work". They imposed toxic positivity in us - even though we are treated like this, our work is still spared (we still have jobs and are not terminated from work). Latifah
Authoritarian Leaders	She was not a fierce person, but she managed everything at the faculty according to her way only. She had the skills of nagging at us and threatening us (if you don't do this, what do you think will happen, etc.). Reen
Misleading Leaders	They have inconsistent direction, and sometimes their decisions are contradictory. We have been promised so many good things and rainbows. They have been promising so many things, but a lot of times, none of them happened. But I am yet to see whether all these promises will be fulfilled. Mia
Weak & Indecisive Leaders	In our meetings at the faculty level, he would just agree with our emotions and ideas. But I'm not sure if he even took all of our concerns to a higher level. I don't know what he said to the management. The previous dean was so much of a "claw leader," and this new dean is seen as a person without a spine – a "spineless leader". Reen Management has always taken the back seat in decision-making. Alex

This research uncovered a lot of academics' frustrations towards their leaders. They had such a strong negative experience when they started to open up and talk about their anger toward people holding leadership positions at their universities. Their frustrations and anger could be seen from their testimony of psychosocial hazard experience.

Discussion

Self-Serving Leaders

Academics reported feeling neglected and unheard, with the impression that their superiors prioritised their own needs and interests over those of their subordinates. This aligns with the work of) (Cox & Griffiths, 2005), who identified leadership as a critical factor in developing work-related stress. The narratives emphasise a recurring sentiment regarding leadership: self-serving motives. The respondents feel that university leaders consistently introduce new initiatives to improve the institution or its staff and satisfy their personal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Control-Oriented Leaders

The findings highlight concerns about a leadership culture that is control-oriented and restrictive. The evidence of a 'yes-man' culture, as described by Alex, suggests a potentially toxic environment where diversity of thought and constructive criticism is discouraged. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO, 1986, 2016a, 2016b), this kind of leader may lead to increased stress and burnout among academics, as they may feel compelled to suppress their views and comply with the decisions and directives of their superiors even when they disagree (ILO, 2016b). As the dean of his faculty, Alex slowly experienced stress due to his frustrations with the toxic behaviour of management leaders. This leadership style is intertwined with a cultural aspect, suggesting a more significant societal norm playing a role.

Unempathetic Leaders

The respondents' narratives paint a concerning picture of leadership in the university, marked predominantly by a lack of empathy. Multiple respondents express the perception that the university's management prioritises its own interests, often to the detriment of the academics they are meant to support. A significant point of contention is that some leaders may rely on outdated norms and expectations, potentially stemming from their experiences in a different era. This was evident in the demanding requirements in the KPI. They did not show any empathy towards how academics could achieve the KPIs. Such a leadership approach can demotivate staff, undermining the primary purpose and mission of the academic institution.

Biased & Favoritist Leaders

The respondents' narratives shed light on a concerning pattern of perceived favouritism and bias within the university's leadership. They highlight a perception that leaders disproportionately favour those who align with their views or can provide them with tangible benefits. This favouritism often overlooks genuine contributions made by employees, creating a sense of exclusion and undervaluation. One respondent noted that his efforts were only recognised when they directly benefitted the leadership. Such a transactional approach to employee recognition can lead to diminished motivation and a sense of exploitation, as the academic shares. A repeated issue suggests that the primary concern of the leadership is maintaining a positive perception with top management, even at the expense of genuinely addressing employee concerns.

Narcissistic Leaders

The accounts shed light on narcissistic leadership tendencies within the university's higher echelons. Several key insights emerge from these narratives:

Demand for Unconditional Gratitude: The higher-ranking individuals' emphasis on gratitude, irrespective of the workplace environment and conditions, is reminiscent of narcissistic traits. Such requests force employees to suppress genuine concerns and grievances, leading to a sense of invalidation.

Toxic Positivity: The toxic positivity introduced by Latifah implies that employees are expected to project a positive demeanour constantly, regardless of the issues or challenges they face. This kind of attitude stifles genuine feedback and concerns, further alienating employees. She further emphasised that this mindset dismissed the legitimate problems and challenges faced by academics, suggesting that as long as they have a job and are not terminated, they should not voice their grievances. Latifah's remarks shed light on the impact of toxic positivity on employee well-being, highlighting the need for a more balanced and supportive approach that addressed the concerns and challenges employees face rather than dismissing them.

Indifference to Employee Well-Being: Latifah's comments also highlight an apparent disconnect between management's awareness of issues and their willingness or capacity to address them. This gap can result in a feeling of neglect and a belief that management is out of touch with employees' daily realities.

Dictatorial Attitude: Taufiq's experience underscores a key trait of narcissistic leaders - a need for unwavering obedience and a lack of tolerance for dissent. Such a mindset can create an environment where he gradually hesitates to voice concerns or offer constructive feedback. Ultimately, this kind of environment would stifle innovation and growth.

Authoritarian Leaders

The narratives underscore the presence of authoritarian leadership traits within the institution, mainly as portrayed through the academics' experiences. The authoritarian traits that these academics faced are discussed below:

Domineering Nature: Reen's use of phrases like "put her claws on us" and "dictated us" suggests an overbearing and controlling leadership style. This portrayal suggests a dominating leader who seeks control over her subordinates rather than collaboration.

Rigid Imposition of Personal Policies: Reen's account of her superior imposing policies that weren't necessarily aligned with the university's official stances signifies an overreach of power—for example, freezing leaves to ensure compliance with her personal agendas. The act of freezing leaves during critical times, like meetings or exams, shows a lack of trust in employees' judgment and commitment. Such actions frustrated the academics and, as such, made them feel unappreciated or untrusted.

Use of Threats and Fear: The repeated mention of the leader using nagging, threats, and speculative consequences to manipulate the faculty indicates a reliance on fear-based tactics. While such strategies might ensure compliance in the short term, they erode trust, foster resentment, and can lead to reduced commitment in the long run.

Misleading Leaders

The narratives provided highlight concerns surrounding leadership inconsistency and a lack of follow-through on promises within the university:

Inconsistent Direction: Mia's observations indicate that the university's leadership struggles with providing a clear and consistent direction. This inconsistency can confuse academics and disrupt their ability to strategise and execute their responsibilities effectively.

Contradictory Decisions: A leadership that often makes contradictory decisions can erode trust and hinder forward momentum. Such choices may result in wasted resources, as efforts, once deemed essential, can be quickly overturned. Moreover, such contradictions can diminish faith in the leadership's judgment.

Unfulfilled Promises: Mia's recounting of the many "good things and rainbows" promised underscores a pattern of over-promising and under-delivering. The failure to fulfil these promises tarnishes the leadership's credibility and breeds disillusionment and cynicism among staff.

In short, the respondents' experiences shed light on the challenges posed by a leadership that is inconsistent, contradictory, and often fails to deliver on its commitments. Such misleading leadership styles can lead to confusion, disillusionment, and decreased morale among staff, potentially affecting the overall performance and reputation of the institution.

Weak & Indecisive Leaders

The findings shed light on the challenges posed by leadership that is perceived as weak, indecisive, and lacking in effective decision-making capabilities:

Passive Management Style: Alex and Reen observed a passive management style where leadership is either non-committal or takes a backseat in decision-making. Such an approach can lead to ambiguity and confusion, preventing the effective implementation of strategies or policies.

Perception of Being Outdated: Reen's experience with a previous Vice-Chancellor points towards a leader who is not in touch with modern management practices. Despite thinking of himself as progressive, his conservative approach, focusing on pleasing people and avoiding confrontation, undermines effective leadership.

Lack of Direction: Reen's analogy of a captain without direction for the ship emphasises the importance of leaders providing clear guidance. Without it, departments or faculties can flounder, leading to stagnation or misaligned efforts.

Lack of Assertiveness: The reference to confrontational management meetings underlines the importance of a leader's ability to mediate, make decisions, and provide direction. A leader perceived as weak can lead to internal power struggles or conflicts as individuals or factions attempt to fill the perceived leadership vacuum.

Discrepancy Between Internal and External Communication: Reen's observations suggest a gap between what was agreed upon at the faculty level and what was communicated to higher management. This disconnect can lead to mistrust and doubts about the leader's ability to represent and fight for their team's interests.

Unresponsiveness: Mia's experience underscores the frustration that can arise when leaders don't respond to concerns or reports. Such unresponsiveness can be perceived as a lack of respect or interest, eroding trust and confidence in leadership. This inconsistency in direction and contradictory decisions can create challenges for employees as they navigate their work responsibilities and align their efforts with the university's goals. Mia's remark highlighted the importance of effective leadership in providing clear guidance and consistent decision-making to foster a more stable and productive work environment.

In conclusion, a perceived lack of decisiveness and strength in leadership can result in various adverse outcomes, from confusion and inefficiency to mistrust and internal conflict. It emphasises the importance of assertive, clear, and responsive leadership in maintaining an institution's morale, trust, and effective functioning. As (Dust et al., 2018) described in their findings, when ethical leaders are emotionally exhausted, their ability to motivate their teams is hindered, like what Alex, Jess, and Reen were experiencing. This emotional exhaustion weakens the leaders' direct influence on psychological empowerment and, indirectly, their impact on their employees' current and future success. To simplify, an emotionally drained leader may struggle to inspire their team, which can dampen the team members' sense of empowerment and negatively affect their performance and potential for success. Nixon et al. (2012) confirmed that the key to any organisation's success relies on leaders and managers who can effectively inspire and stimulate their teams toward goal attainment. Jess's description of leaders not understanding the challenges academics face today also echoes a disconnect between leadership and the actual workforce experiences. This lack of understanding could worsen the feelings of not being heard or valued, leading to increased work-related stress. The World Health Organisation (WHO) (WHO, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023) identifies such a disconnect as a potential source of job stress, as workers may feel unsupported and misunderstood.

Similarly, the expression of 'toxic positivity', as described by Latifah, signifies a culture where issues and grievances are not addressed appropriately. Instead, employees are expected to maintain a positive outlook despite experiencing challenging circumstances. This could result in increased psychological distress as individuals may feel that their feelings and experiences are invalidated, an issue that the WHO has also acknowledged as a potential source of work-related stress.

Fundamentally, the academics' prevailing sentiment was that their superiors showed little concern for their well-being, prioritising their interests above those of the academics. The academics perceived a lack of genuine care and empathy from their bosses, focusing primarily on self-interest. This perception suggests a disconnect between the leadership and the well-being of the academics, highlighting the need for a more supportive and employee-centric approach to foster a positive and inclusive work environment.

Under the leadership theme, eight distinct leadership criteria have been identified as psychosocial hazards. They are Self-Serving, Control-Oriented, Unempathetic, Biased & Favouritist, Narcissistic, Authoritarian, Misleading, Weak & Indecisive Leaders. The experiences shared by the academics under this theme suggest that effective leadership should be characterised by empathy, understanding, consistent communication, and fairness, which are critical in promoting a healthy and supportive work environment. This calls for efforts to improve leadership practices within academic institutions and prioritise academics' well-being in decision-making processes.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study has identified eight crucial codes within the Leadership theme. These codes, encompassing Self-Serving Leaders, Control-Oriented Leaders, Unempathetic Leaders, Biased & Favouritist Leaders, Narcissistic Leaders, Authoritarian Leaders, Misleading Leaders, and Weak & Indecisive Leaders, serve as critical principles or attributes shaping effective leadership. The insights derived from these codes offer a foundational understanding of the intricate dynamics and practices of leadership among university academics.

This study offers practical and theoretical contributions by identifying psychosocial hazards associated with distinct leadership styles in private research-focused universities. The leadership typologies, including Self-Serving, Control-Oriented, Unempathetic, Biased & Favouritist, Narcissistic, Authoritarian, Misleading, and Weak & Indecisive Leaders, provide practical insights for institutions to recognise and address these issues. The research identifies and categorises various psychosocial hazards induced by leadership styles commonly found in private research-focused universities. This practical insight enables institutions to recognise potential challenges that may arise within their leadership structures. By shedding light on leadership-induced psychosocial hazards, the study promotes awareness among university administrators, faculty members, and other stakeholders regarding the negative impacts of certain leadership behaviours on academic staff. The study offers practical recommendations and strategies for addressing psychosocial hazards associated with specific leadership styles. Institutions can utilise these insights to develop policies, training programs, and support mechanisms to mitigate risks and promote a healthier work environment. Understanding the detrimental effects of toxic leadership on academic staff allows institutions to foster a positive and supportive organisational culture. By proactively addressing psychosocial hazards, universities can cultivate an environment conducive to productivity, collaboration, and employee well-being.

The research makes a significant theoretical contribution by identifying leadership as a distinct psychosocial hazard within the organisational context, thereby expanding upon the existing theoretical framework proposed by (Cox & Griffiths, 2005). While leadership is traditionally considered a component of Organizational Culture & Function in Cox & Griffith's framework, this study highlights it as a separate and pivotal element, identifying it as a psychosocial hazard. By delineating leadership as an independent psychosocial hazard, the research extends the conceptual boundaries of Cox & Griffith's framework, enriching our understanding of the multifaceted nature of organisational dynamics. This recognition underscores the critical role of leadership in shaping employees' psychosocial well-being and organisational outcomes, warranting dedicated attention within scholarly discourse and practical interventions. Moreover, emphasising leadership as a distinct dimension of psychosocial hazards, the research underscores the need for nuanced approaches to organisational assessment and intervention. This recognition prompts scholars and practitioners to explore leadership dynamics within the broader context of organisational culture and function, including leadership styles, behaviours, and their impact on employee mental health and job satisfaction.

In summary, identifying leadership as a newly emerging theme in psychosocial hazards contributes to the evolution of theoretical frameworks such as Cox & Griffith's model, highlighting the intricate interplay between leadership practices, organisational dynamics, and employee well-being. This theoretical advancement deepens our understanding of organisational phenomena and informs evidence-based strategies for promoting healthier work environments and enhancing organisational effectiveness.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: We are currently working on this project, and the data will be used for future research and analysis. However, any researcher who needs the data for further investigations can contact the corresponding author through email with reasonable reason.

Declaration of conflicting interests: All authors declared that there is no conflict of interest

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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