

**Title**

What do early career academics think? Exploring the Leadership Perceptions of Academics and examining Instructional Leadership and organizational components in Vietnamese Higher Education Institutions.

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## Abstract

During the 1980s, K–12 schools in the United States and later in the Western setting conducted extensive research on instructional leadership. However, this kind of leadership research is scarce in the setting of the higher education industry. This lack resulted in insufficient scholarly work on instructional leadership in higher education. To fill the literature gap in the context of higher education literature, this study is essential to be conducted. Applying qualitative analysis based on interviews with academics, this study investigates the perceptions of leadership characteristics in higher education in Vietnam.

**Keywords:** instructional leadership, knowledge sharing, work passion, organizational health, higher education, Vietnam.

## INTRODUCTION

Education has been popularly proven as one of the most crucial involvements in national economic development, innovation, and future arrangement. The importance of higher education institutions and the effectiveness of their programs have long been acknowledged, as well as their value to society. The qualities and traits of its leadership are a crucial element in developing a high-quality higher education (Adewale and Ghavifekr, 2019); (Khan et al., 2020)). Because talented leaders in higher education can change the existing situation and produce a more favorable atmosphere for learning, knowledge improvement, and research. A healthy organization, motivated employees, and a harmonious working environment may also result from this. Challenges to effective universities may come from sociocultural and organizational practices and mindsets (Puteri and Arifin, 2020).

Leadership is the most effective method to implement and uphold the above-mentioned challenges. Hence, educational leaders must pay a higher level of attention to their leadership style since it can directly or indirectly affect the level of organizational health, ability to share knowledge, and sense of empowerment, all of which are important for building an effective organization and ensuring a positive outcome overall. Research have revealed that Vietnam is a country with limited acknowledgment and findings in higher education and in the application of leadership in such a setting ((Dong and Phuong, 2018); (Hallinger and Bryant, 2013); (Tran et al., 2022)).

In this dynamic environment, Vietnam's education system plays a crucial role in achieving the nation's goals of political stability, economic success, and sociocultural advancement. Despite this, there has not been much research done in the international literature on education in Vietnam ((Hallinger et al., 2015a); (Hallinger et al., 2015a)).

The theoretical and practical benefit of studying leadership in a range of organizational settings has just lately been clear to researchers studying educational leadership, in contrast to studies in executive leadership (Gumus et al., 2018). Educational leaders, in general and in Vietnam, have been struggling due to a lack of appropriate leadership guidelines in the educational setting (Kelly, 2000). With a qualified leader, it is easier for an educational organization to function efficiently. According to (Ryu and Nguyen, 2021), leaders have been continuously suffering difficulties in their roles despite having the most significant impact on organizational development as their top priority.

A thorough understanding of the current situation and difficulties of the higher education sector in Vietnam is necessary for developing effective leadership. Further study is required to comprehend leadership in higher education in Vietnam better and raise awareness of the value of effective leadership that can impact vital organizational elements (Chau et al., 2022). Therefore, this paper will partly contribute to the current understanding and literature of the Vietnamese higher education sector as well as the general educational leadership practices towards organizational components.

The level of significance of this study can be discussed from multiple angles. First and foremost, this work will add to the body of theoretical literature. Internationally, the significance of instructional leadership techniques has been consistently emphasized by academics, policymakers, researchers, and practitioners ((Hallinger et al., 2020); (Hallinger et al., 2015b); (Kaparou and Bush, 2016)). Nevertheless, there is indeed little or no mention of instructional leadership in the literature on higher education leadership ((Ersozlu and Saklan, 2016); (Shaked, 2021); (Wang and Berger, 2010)). There is a knowledge gap since conventional higher education leadership research typically needs to pay more attention to this kind of leadership ((Hofmeyer et al., 2015); (Quinlan, 2014)). In order to broadly address the gap in the literature on higher education leadership, this study is crucial.

In particular, there is still a severe lack of research on instructional leadership, a borrowed idea in higher education. This study's first goal is to investigate how academic staff members' perspectives of leadership qualities in higher education in Vietnam are perceived by doing a qualitative analysis of them. Hence, the researchers aimed to answer the following questions:

*What are the perceptions of academic staff about the leadership characteristics in their organizations? How does leadership in Vietnam universities impact individual and overall organizational outcomes?*

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Overview of Educational Leadership**

It is a challenge to define a "perfect leader." Scholars from various fields, including economics, business, corporate, politics, and education, continue to debate these issues. The explanation is that no structure, model, or established definition perfectly describes an "ideal" leader. Moreover, the internal and external environment and conditions, time, context, culture, and perspective will impact leadership and a leader's performance.

The two most common roles of leadership, according to (Hallinger and Heck, 1996), are giving direction and increasing influence. According to (Marzano et al., 2001), educational leadership prioritized student learning outcomes as well as the standard of instruction and curriculum. Hence, it is essential to equip pupils with a top-notch curriculum and excellent instruction if the lecturers want them to learn. Additional research was being done on the beneficial effects of leadership on academic success ((Leithwood and Jantzi, 1997), (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2009); (Leithwood et al., 1995)).

These studies of K–12 school reform compared the performance of schools under the leadership of successful principals to those under the leadership of their less successful former peers. The study's findings by (Leithwood and Jantzi, 1997) revealed that a leader's actions directly impact a teacher's perception. Researchers have also demonstrated that a set of effective leadership traits can serve as a foundation for effective school leadership performance ((Leithwood and Jantzi, 1997), (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2005), (Leithwood and Jantzi, 2009); (Leithwood et al., 1995)). A solid foundation is suitable and necessary for schools to handle environmental difficulties that can be discussed as educational reform or restructuring. This might be a motivating factor for the school's development and advancement of its skills and production.

### **Higher Education Leadership**

There has been limited scholarly research on leadership in higher education. A comparable vast quantity of research and studies recognized leadership in K–12 schools and other fields, including public administration, global firms, and businesses in multiple fields. Hence, there is undeniable a dearth of research on leadership issues in higher education ((Bryman and Lilley, 2009)). The corporate world laments that they have just advanced from the Bronze Age of leadership to the Iron Age, according to (Gmelch, 2013), who raised awareness of this shortage. Higher education institutions might still be operating in the Dark Ages. Similar cautionary opinions from other academics highlighted the worrisome necessity for this topic ((Birnbaum et al., 1989); (Gmelch and Miskin, 1993) (Esen et al., 2020).

The creation and transmission of knowledge are the responsibility of universities. In the age of globalization, they are anticipated to play a crucial role in driving political, economic, and social change and providing nations with highly qualified and skilled labor forces.

This is comparable to placing a higher standard of outcome and accountability in universities' performance in creating a developing “knowledge society” with its highly skilled individuals (Mitchell and Nielsen, 2012). Success in college is now widely acknowledged as one of the best measures of a country's progress. Higher education leadership is essential in these circumstances. Studies have revealed that the performance of educational institutions depends much on and is correlated with the caliber of its leaders (Smith and Hughey, 2006).

### **Origin of Instructional Leadership Theory**

The studies in higher education leadership encompass a wide range of topics, but it is difficult to pinpoint a specific concept of higher education leadership that derived from K12 schools. While instructional leadership is extensively studied in primary and secondary schools, its application and investigation in higher education institutions have been limited. However, it has been observed that instructional leadership aligns well with the Asian higher education sector, particularly due to the influence of the “Confucian tradition” prevalent in the region. The Confucian tradition upholds hierarchical relationships and impacts various aspects of life, including familial and communal connections, communication, and responsibilities ((Borton, 2000); (Ho and Tikly, 2012)). Vietnam, in particular, has a strong influence of the Confucian tradition, as evidenced by prior cross-cultural research in Asia ((Anh Vu et al., 2022); (Ho and Tikly, 2012); (Walker and Hallinger, 2015)) and Vietnam itself ((Ralston et al., 2006); (Truong et al., 2017)). The hierarchical norms inherent in Vietnamese culture are shaped by Confucian

ideas, and compassing aspects such as patriarchy, gender, age, social roles, and rank. Within the Confucian cultural framework, hierarchy is considered a natural and an unalterable aspect of society for most individuals ((Ralston et al., 2006); (Truong et al., 2017)).

Moreover, empirical evidence from education scholars has demonstrated the impact of instructional leadership on education organization and management in Vietnam ((Hallinger and Thang, 2014); (Hallinger et al., 2017)), as well as in other East Asian societies ((Ho and Tikly, 2012); (Walker and Hallinger, 2015)).

During the 1960s and 1970s, research on school leadership primarily focused on the qualities of effective school leaders ((Austin, 1979); (Bridges, 1967); (Chase and Guba, 1955); (Edmonds, 1979)). These studies emphasized the importance of effective leaders who prioritized the quality of teaching and learning. However, scholars held different viewpoints on the specific characteristics of an effective leader. (Chase and Guba, 1955) argued that a leader's responsibility is demonstrated through providing direction and implementing instructional practices. (Bridges, 1967) discussed the intervention of program quality, instruction, and the importance of aligning instructional programs with school goals and objectives. (Edmonds, 1979) highlighted leaders' ability to provide materials and motivational support to improve teaching quality, establish academic goals, develop instructional strategies, and monitor students' performance and progress. These early efforts laid the groundwork for the development of instructional leadership theory, making it one of the most extensively studied forms of leadership in the educational context.

While instructional leadership has been extensively studied in the Western context, it has recently gained attention in the Eastern K12 context, including countries like China, Thailand, Indonesia, Singapore, and Malaysia ((Hou et al., 2019); (Liu, 2018); (Nguyen et al., 2020); (Sharma et al., 2018); (Sofo et al., 2012)). Although instructional leadership aligns well with Vietnam's political circumstance of Communism and a top-down hierarchy of power, there are no official governmental terms, conditions, laws, or regulations explicitly defining the criteria or requirements for school principals or leaders in higher education institutions. Similarly, the well-being and behavior of educators lack national recognition. The majority of research on instructional leadership has been conducted by Hallinger, a prominent educator and author in the field. However most of the studies employ A qualitative approach, resulting in a lack of diversified methodologies and perspectives in examining the topic,

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Study approach and design**

This study aims to have an in-depth analysis of academics' perceived leadership and explore the relationship between instructional leadership and organizational components in Vietnamese Higher Education Institutions. Based on what has been found in the literature and to achieve the research purpose, the nature of this paper is the explorative qualitative study (Tashakkori and Creswell, 2007).

Most of the participants are early-career academics with a range of experience varied from 3 to 10 years, and the average working experience in the education field was 5 years.

As the nature of instructional leadership is still being limited in the Vietnamese context, therefore; the nature of the research is explorative. For that reason, the research design is exploratory. The researcher found that it is suitable and reasonable to have the first phase of the research with a qualitative approach. The reason is that qualitative research allows the researcher to collect data in a natural setting to discover people's ideas and data, so the data analysis can be inductively conducted; and then patterns and themes can be established. The understanding and literature about higher education leadership in Vietnam are still limited; therefore, the first qualitative phase will allow the researcher better to understand the leadership concept in Vietnamese higher education. This phase is conducted by having interviews with experts and professionals. The first stage was to validate and understand the context of instructional leadership in the Vietnamese higher education institutions' atmosphere. In this stage, interviews will be conducted to validate and understand important issues, revealing the nature of this topic under the context of instructional leadership in the Vietnamese context. The interviews will be recorded, and the researcher will take notes and details. The interview will be around 30 minutes; however, it is open-ended, so it will be shorter or longer than expected.

The below table summarized the interview's questions and topics. Moreover, it also illustrated the themes of the study after group the topic appropriately.

| Qualitative Questions and Answers - Topics   | Themes level 1             | Themes level 2    |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Reasons career in education                  | Meaning                    | Empowerment       |
| New ideas proposal                           | Impact                     |                   |
| Decision making                              | Self-determination         |                   |
| Supports received                            | Communities of practice    | Knowledge Sharing |
| Knowledge Sharing from colleagues            |                            |                   |
| Knowledge Sharing from the boss              |                            |                   |
| Relationship with colleagues                 | Personal interaction       |                   |
| Relationship with Boss                       |                            |                   |
| Leadership style                             | Leadership Awareness       | Leadership        |
| Opinions and feeling about leadership styles |                            |                   |
| Dislike about leadership style               |                            |                   |
| The lecturer been changed and impacted       | Leadership Acknowledgement |                   |
| Motivation                                   | Harmoniousness             | Work Passion      |
| Passion                                      |                            |                   |
| Impacts of leader in motivation/passion      | External Influence         |                   |

## FINDINGS

## ***Empowerment***

### ***a. Meaning***

In 1980, empowerment was discovered ((Blanchard et al., 2001); (Zare et al., 2015)). Empowerment can be seen as the progress of reinforcing an individual's views and increasing self-confidence, as well as an effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of an organization (Gordon, 1993). In addition, the psychological impressions of employees' responses to work situations are also known as psychological empowerment (Meng et al., 2016).

Meaning shows the extent of work's influence on a person's evaluation of work quality and values to his or her ideology or standards. Specifically, meaning also denotes a congruence between the situation of an individual's work attributes and their mentality and conduct (Spreitzer, 1995). As observed from the results, there were multiple reasons why academics started their career in higher education. Most participants explained that they became university lecturers because they love sharing knowledge with others (1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 11). This reason accounted for 46% of the overall response. It would be a waste of time not to note that knowledge sharing is also a behavior that is intentionally motivated by a person's philosophy, family and social surroundings and condition, and most importantly, a feeling of empowerment (Dasí et al., 2017). Also, (Law and Ngai, 2008) contend that knowledge sharing can also be viewed as the voluntary dissemination of acquired knowledge, skills, and experiences from one individual to another.

Besides, 38% of the respondents (2, 5, 6, 9, 14) clarified that they had found a good opportunity provided by higher education institutions; hence, they applied and tried their abilities. Also, 3 out of 13 respondents shared that they figured out that they can teach and love teaching students. Two respondents said that their previous job was overloaded and they needed to rethink about their career path and work-life balance; hence, they chose to be a lecturer with more flexibility in terms of time and workload *"I started my education after a period of time working in the industry and I felt the work-life balance was not fulfilled. So I also thought about an education career because I thought and other people around me thought that I may be good at teaching. And also I like the act of sharing my knowledge, and I thought I could give me a try.... I think I am a good fit in that education career brings a lot of advantages, about flexibility."*. Interestingly, 15% of the respondents became educators because of the family's tradition *"The reason I started my career as a lecturer, I think can from two reason. The first is because I my parents, they are both teachers. I grew up in a family that has the traditional career of the family and also, I have the ability to teach as well by watching them teaching their children, and I am inspired by my parents."*.

### ***b. Impact***

The impact is a person's ability to exert a particular amount of influence on his or her colleagues or on the operation's plans, administration, or outcomes. Hence, the researcher designed the question to understand the impact of the lecturers on their organizations through the process of making and proposing new ideas to their leaders. Among 13 respondents, the researchers received 54% (7 out of 13) of the respondents said their leaders were always welcome and willing to listen to new ideas from them. However, 38% of the participants also discussed that even their leaders were very open towards the new ideas and proposals; the process of making

ideas come true had to face many constraints due to the university's procedure, mutual agreement among different stakeholders from the faculty's level to the organizational level.

*Bright ideas are very welcome, and any initiative will be considered, but we have a lot of constraints.*

### c. Self determination

Self-determination indicates the level of happiness at work as well as the degree of autonomy in executing job activities and procedures. When a leader empowers his or her subordinates, he or she tends to give more decision-making power to the employees. The employees will feel more confident, respected, and responsible towards their position. He or she tends to be more determined in what he or she is or will be doing. Hence, the researcher discovered the decision-making room of the participating academics to understand their level of self-determination. 6 of the 13 (1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 10) participants clarified that they have their own decision-making within their Teaching task. This can be understood as the lecturers having their own Academic freedom in designing their lectures, quizzes, or the way he or she instructs and delivers the lesson. However, all other tasks needed to be agreed upon by leaders and mutual agreements or approval from the organizational level. It is also essential to mention that in some cases, the leaders do want to fully support and approve the feasible ideas; however, in some universities, the decision-making process and approval needed many levels and parties "*I think even in the Dean our faculty, the decision making is still limited compared to the rector of the university.*", "*I have no decision-making power, but you have to be responsible for everything.*". Prior to 1990, researchers and strategists of organizations defined human resource empowerment as management actions and strategies such as delegating authority and decision-making power to lower levels of an organization, sharing information with employees, and ensuring their access to human resources (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Researchers and organizational theorists previously defined human resource empowerment as management actions and strategies such as delegating authority and decision-making power to lower levels of the organization, sharing information with employees, and guaranteeing their access to human resources. According to (Quinn and Spreitzer, 1997), this is a mechanistic conception of empowerment. Organizational psychologists, on the other hand, have recognized human resource empowerment as a nuanced and multidimensional concept since 1990, distinguishing between situational variables and employee responses to these characteristics (Thomas and Velthouse, 1990). Specifically, (Conger and Kanungo, 1988) argued that managerial activities are unnecessary for empowering employees. Management's delegation of decision-making authority and power to employees does not constitute empowerment.

*So particularly in teaching, I can organize the class following my own style or my knowledge or idea, but other things like the contact, organizing events or admin stuff, I have to follow. I also in charge in managing an academic club in my department. So even that kind of activity is also following the idea of my manager, like who I will invite them to become a judge or what kind of prized or gift will give to the winner. Yes, many kinds of aspects we have to follow.*

### **Knowledge Sharing**

#### a. Communities of practice

Knowledge has been demonstrated to be one of the most important sources of information for humans in preserving irreplaceable history, learning new cases, and resolving problems. More importantly, in this knowledge-based era, knowledge is extremely powerful in creating new creativity, innovation, and inventions at the organizational, national, and international levels ((Al-Kurdi et al., 2020); (Iqbal, 2021); (Liao et al., 2004)). As a result, knowledge is critical for an organization's outcome and performance and should be considered to progress in the wisdom of organizational development. Hence, to promote the flow of knowledge within an organization, there should be a certain level of knowledge sharing behavior ((Moghavvemi et al., 2017)). As discussed previously, the majority of the academic respondents love to share their knowledge; hence, they decided to become a lecturer. Therefore, since they first started their career in universities, they also received different sources of support. This can be seen as the nature of the academic environment. People love to share and support each other; however, it also led to a situation that the people can voluntarily support or by request from the management level (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 13). Employees exhibit knowledge sharing behavior when they freely share their acquired knowledge with other organizational members, stakeholders, and colleagues (Moghavvemi et al., 2017). Knowledge implementation and dissemination within an organization may increase productivity, decision-making effectiveness, cost efficiency, employee satisfaction, and empowerment ((Chedid et al., 2020); (Esmaeelinezhad and Afrazeh, 2018); (Yang et al., 2020)).

Specifically, the lecturers usually share the teaching experience, materials and also tips among them. These are the most popularly discussed and shared component of knowledge. This also helps the new lecturer feel more confident, empowered and correlated to his or her job. However, there was a noticeable sharing from the respondent that attracted the researcher attention *“The age gap in my faculty is actually quite huge... So like half of the faculty members are 30s... the other half was like was born in the early 80s, so they were nearly in the 40s or more... there are some like distance between the two-part of my faculty I guess yeah.”* Even the academics love to share and support, but there are factors that prevent the level of sharing effectiveness.

#### b. Personal interaction

##### Relationship with colleagues

The participants positively shared their relationship with their peers. They discussed that they can easily share with their colleagues about their difficulties at work, then the solution (1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 10, 11, 12). The reasons were that they were usually in the same area of expertise, or age range and similar working schedules. Besides, with the colleagues they have been working and interacting the most, they have formed a closer relationship as "family members" and they have also interacted after work *“Not only have each other in workplace, the thing related to the academic one, but also in our personal life as well. They're willing to share and to help.(2)”*

##### Relationship with leader

The lecturers they mostly described their relationship with the leaders as *“good one”*, *“I had a very close relationship with the leaders”*, *“other teachers in my faculty in my department still*

*maintain a good relationship with her”, “I have to admit that she does it very well and the relationship with all the lecturers is so friendly.”* (1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13). This can be explained that they have a set of mutual goals that they have to achieve together. The universities set the goals and plans each year for the faculty to achieve. Additionally, their performance and salary can also be evaluated and based on the achievement of the goals and plans. Hence, the whole faculty is needed to support each other and together conquer the targets. As a result, the relationship between the leader and subordinate is significant as it can glue all the members together. They then feel connected and dedicated to their job.

In contrast, 3 lecturers shared that they do not have a smooth-sailing relationship with their leader. And coincidentally, these 3 lecturers come from the same faculty of a university. This faculty also had the same operation as the others; however, their leader was not that close and friendly to them *"not all the members have a good relationship with her", "we know that (the relationship) not really good"* (5,6,7). As these responses contributed to the level of knowledge sharing within higher institutions, the researcher can be enlightened and see clearly the relationship between knowledge sharing and leadership style. Hence, the following discussion will be about leadership as perceived by academic staff.

## **Leadership**

### **a. Leadership Awareness**

As the leadership style will greatly impact several aspects of the working atmosphere and the organization; hence, the researcher discovered this aspect from the participants. There were 4 responses said that they were quite happy and comfortable with their current leadership style because they received appropriate support, instruction and, more than that was the professional bonding relationship “I think I'm very comfortable with the leadership style.”, “He's good too.”(1, 3, 10, 13). However, the same respondents also shared that they expected their leader to be stricter so that they can have more “push factor” to work, they found that *“But it does sometimes strict leadership can be better.”*

In contrast, the participants number 4, 5, 6, 7 felt uncomfortable and specifically expressed their unpleasant experience and feelings with their leader *“There's not much of the consideration or the empathy. Yeah, maybe the empathy is the right word for the leader.”* (5), *“I feel like it's kind of toxic leadership style ...She can't accept some good solution or ideas from different sides, especially from employees or subordinates, or staffs... feel like us being emotionally abusive.”* (6)

Giving employees control and autonomy over decision-making boosts their level of efficiency, confidence, and responsibility and enables them to play a more effective role within the organization (Erstad, 1997). Psychological empowerment is a collection of perceptions shaped by a person's work environment, although it is not a constant personality attribute (Meng et al., 2016).

### **b. Leadership Acknowledgement**

Lecturers admitted that since they worked with their leaders, they found themselves changes and impacted in various ways. *"So I have learned from my Dean that is you sometimes you need to use your feeling."* (11).

## **Work Passion**

### **a. Harmoniousness**

A person is said to have a "work passion" if they are driven to participate in a task or activity because they think it to be worthwhile, fascinating, and worth their time and energy (Vallerand et al., 2003). A sense of enthusiasm improves people's health, motivation, and a sense of purpose (Vallerand et al., 2003). A key element of success, growth, and fulfillment at work has been identified as passion as a consequence of substantial academic research in the management field (Burke and Fiksenbaum, 2009); (Gilal et al., 2019). The biggest motivation of all responded academic was "share knowledge" (1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11). This can be discussed as to share knowledge and to receive "shared knowledge". As mentioned earlier, academia's nature and characteristic love to share knowledge; hence, this is logical and relevant that this factor become the most popularly mentioned motivation. Next, "the students" is the first runner up in term of motivation *"My motivation I think is the student. I love it. I love to communicate with my students. And I love to deliver knowledge."* (2), *"I think the motivation is that the students are very nice, the colleagues they are very nice."* (4). 6 lecturers have shown their special bonding emotion towards their students, which represented as their main crucial source of motivation (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 9). Respondent said that the students brought them a good source of energy, they were not only lecturers and students, but they could also talk and share different things together. Especially, having a chance to interact and teach the students made the lecturer feel *"more valuable"*, *"Nurturing the younger generation and I see myself more valuable with other activities"* (5). Additionally, lecturers also found their happiness and connectedness at work through their colleagues, and that made them feel motivated at work (4, 5, 8) *"I think the environment in our university is, especially in our faculty is very nice, very young and I also learn a lot from my colleagues."* (4) *"My strongest motivation to go out to work is my colleagues in university, because whenever I don't have any idea on my research on my teaching, I just talked to them and then it the idea generated immediately so we can solve problem with each other. Anybody I meet in our faculty; they also offer me some solution for my research and my teaching"* (8). The organization where the lecturers work was also a source of motivation *"The second one that I would like to go to work is because my organization especially, I have an idea about how the department works. But for my department and for my faculty, they offer a really good working environment, a friendly one. So I feel comfortable going to the workplace to stay there. I don't scare seeing my leader there. They may ask me to do something. It's free and quite comfortable to get to work."* (2).

Since the lecturers interestingly discussed and shared their source of motivation, the researcher believed that there would be a higher level of motivation as work passion. Studies have shown that passion can be transferred from one person to another in various ways. (Cardon, 2008) discovered a transference of passion between entrepreneurs and employees. Furthermore, (Li et al., 2017) discovered that leaders' work passion can be transferred to employees. Although papers and results on the transfer of passion among various parties have been discussed, the interplay between instructional leaders, work passion, and organizational components in higher

education remains largely untapped. Hence, the researcher continuously interacted with the "passion" topic and followed the conversation flow.

7 lecturers from 13 respondents stated that they have found their passion at work (2, 6, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) *"The passion at work I think I found now. As I said at the beginning, I have the motivation I was inside and my parents and when I started to work as a classroom. I have a chance to communicate with students. I have changed a lot of students with their problems. So from my motivation, I think that it can be passion. I feel like I am falling in love with this job and it is also because of that and so how can I define passion. This means that you really love something, right? Love doing something and keep doing that, right? So I can say that I have actually with my job, my career and what I'm doing currently."* (2). Individuals who are enthusiastic about their work are more likely to persevere through challenges and accomplish great things ((Burke and Fiksenbaum, 2009); (Forest et al., 2011)). Work is the only way for a person's identity and significance in life to be realized, which is why it is so important (Vallerand et al., 2007).

This can be discussed that the progress of being a lecturer and then having a chance to interact with the students by sharing knowledge creates the work passion for the lecturers. *"My passion in my work, I'm always happy when I teach my student because I know, when I teach them, I bring them the value and before of my course, I always give them the survey to ask them about what they want to improve and what they like, they want from me and anything they want to ask. So it means that I always create a soft environment when I'm teaching, have the shared the comments with them. My students always give feedback, or my students always ask me so it's the reason why my passion is always high."* (9). Specifically, knowledge sharing is vital to the organization's knowledge management process ((Al-Kurdi et al., 2020); (Riege and O'Keeffe, 2003); (Stuckey and Arkell, 2006); (Talebizadeh et al., 2021)). During the process of information sharing, participants and parties exchange their knowledge voluntarily and without coercion ((Akturan and Çekmecelioğlu, 2016)). Within the operation of knowledge management, knowledge sharing has been recognized as one of the most influential factors on knowledge management effectiveness (Azarbayjani, 2007). (Bartol and Srivastava, 2002) also argued that knowledge sharing occurs when organizational employees can communicate information without hesitation, hence establishing a new body of knowledge.

Besides, lecturers also expressed that they have not yet found their passion (1) or they are currently in the middle of defining their passion at work (3, 7, 5). The respondents that were in "the middle" level of work passion shared the same characteristics that they were early career academics or did not have a well-established relationship with their leader. Hence, this can be argued that the leader can impact positively or negatively on the level of work passion.

For that reason, the next part is going to verify the impact of leader on the level of passion or motivation.

#### b. External influence

From the perspective of the lecturers, the responses have been divided into two groups. There were lecturers truly believed in their own source of passion. Hence, their passion could not be

affected by any external individual or factor “*I think I still remain the same. I don't like to be affected by other people, even by leader.(2)*”, “*However, the passion is not affected by that kind of individual or a leader or my boss because my career. My career is built by myself mentally, not from other people so. And under kind of situation like that I have to motivate myself to process or whether this is still suitable for me to work or not? And I have to consider carefully about that situation. (6)*”

On the other hand, the lecturer received the impact from their leader “*We are sometimes impacted by him like he says very passionately about some topics about teaching and we can learn from that. But sometimes he is angry with us the way we do. He thing it's not really good. We impacted by that also. The feelings. So sometimes we feel very motivated but sometimes we feel like we have no energy to do anything. My boss changed like the weather every day, like the rain, and then the sun.(11)*”

This can be discussed that even if they enjoy their jobs, people's participation in them varies greatly, with significant consequences. An examination of the motivational perspective of passion reveals the methods by which one can discern various patterns of energy and time spent on different activities, which influence people's affection and behavior (Forest et al., 2011).

## CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand the relationship between instructional leadership and other organizational factors. Interestingly, during the data collection and analysis phase, the researcher found that the aforementioned components interact with each other. It can be seen that knowledge sharing has impacted on the level of work passion as well as empowerment. In the Vietnamese context, leaders play a crucial role in maintaining the relationship with their employees, also impacting their level of empowerment, and passion. However, it has been discovered that not only the leaders themselves can have such a huge impact, other factors as organizational environment or colleagues can also be seen as the influences towards the level of work passion, knowledge sharing, and empowerment.

Creating effective leadership in the higher education sector in Vietnam requires a deep level of knowledge about its current state and challenges and background. More research is needed not only to understand the concept of leadership in higher education in Vietnam but also to wake and enlighten the importance of appropriate leadership that would influence the crucial factors of organization (Chau 2022).

Within the process of turning an institution or a university into a healthy organization, leaders are held the main responsibility and accountability for the realization of organizational goals, mission, and vision. For that reason, the leadership style will play a crucial role in defining and shaping the organization's health (Buluc, 2015).

Instructional leadership faced a challenge in implementing its practice when the principals and leaders have to deal with their professional duties and unbalance the workload between the profession and management responsibilities ((Espuny et al., 2020); (Rodrigues and Ávila de Lima, 2021)). As found by (Horng and Loeb, 2010), the number of studies about instructional leadership and organizational health was limited, especially in the context of higher education institutions. Some studies researched the above-mentioned variables but in isolation, or some

studies have been done in a different context (Parlar and Cansoy, 2017). Therefore, the findings of this study hope that it can contribute to the understanding of the current practice and literature. Practically, educational leaders can understand better about their impact and importance towards their subordinates and organization. Then they can acknowledge and develop a new set of appropriate behaviors, attitudes, and leadership style to promote empowerment, work passion, and knowledge sharing within the educational atmosphere. Besides, national policymakers can improve their level of understanding and awareness about factors that may affect the performance of higher education institutions in general and academics in particular. Then, proper regulations and guidelines can be developed and practiced promoting and support the crucial labor force of the nation.

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