

**CULTIVATING ACADEMIC AND
ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP FOR
PHILANTHROPIC FUNDRAISING:
A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR
FUNDRAISERS IN MALAYSIAN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITIES**

JAMIL MUHAMMAD

UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

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by

JAMIL MUHAMMAD

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IAO	Institutional Advancement Office
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
JePEM	Jawatankuasa Etika Penyelidikan Manusia
MoHE	Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia
MRU	Malaysian Public Research University
PHEIs	Public Higher Education Institutions
RM	Malaysian Ringgits (Currency)
University-A	The abbreviation for case study University in Malaysia
UoA	Unit of Analysis

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**PEMBUDAYAAN KEPIMPINAN AKADEMIK DAN PENTADBIRAN
UNTUK PENGUMPULAN DANA FILANTROPIK: KERANGKA KERJA
KOMPETENSI UNTUK PENGUMPUL DANA DI UNIVERSITI
PENYELIDIKAN MALAYSIA**

ABSTRAK

Sejak beberapa dekad yang lalu, Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi (HEI) di seluruh dunia mencari sumber pembiayaan alternatif akibat pengurangan dana kerajaan. Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi Awam (PHEI) di Malaysia juga menghadapi cabaran kewangan selepas sokongan negeri yang menurun sejak tahun 2015 yang menyebabkan mereka perlu memenuhi defisit melalui sumber pembiayaan alternatif. Filantropi telah muncul sebagai alternatif pembiayaan yang berdaya maju untuk institusi pendidikan tinggi awam di Malaysia. Walaupun filantropi dalam pendidikan mempunyai tradisi sejarah yang panjang, perhatian yang lebih besar hanya diberikan dalam beberapa dekad kebelakangan ini terhadap peranan kepimpinan dalam usaha pengumpulan dana bersama dengan pejabat pembangunan institusi untuk meningkatkan hasilnya. Tujuan kajian ini adalah untuk meneroka peranan pemimpin akademik dan pentadbiran universiti dalam pengumpulan dana awam dan membangunkan kerangka kerja kompetensi, kemahiran, dan tingkah laku yang diperlukan yang sesuai untuk kepimpinan HEI dalam pengumpulan dana filantropi. Dipandu oleh falsafah penyelidikan interpretivis, kajian ini memfokuskan kepada sebuah universiti penyelidikan awam Malaysia sebagai kajian kes untuk meneroka fenomena ini. Data kajian ini dikumpulkan melalui sumber primer dan sekunder. Data primer dikumpulkan menggunakan metodologi kualitatif asas dan melalui temubual separa terstruktur dengan 20 peserta termasuk 16 pemimpin HEI dan 4 penderma

utama. Data sekunder diperoleh melalui penyata tahunan universiti kajian kes, laman web, dan bahan promosi pengumpulan dana. Analisis tematik dilakukan menggunakan perisian NVivo Versi 12 untuk menganalisis data. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa kedua-dua pemimpin akademik dan pentadbiran university menyedari pengurangan pembiayaan university awam dan mereka memainkan peranan penting dalam aktiviti pengumpulan dana. Pemimpin akademik cenderung mengambil peranan utama dalam usaha ini, manakala peranan pemimpin pentadbiran terutamanya memudahkan inisiatif pengumpulan dana. Beberapa polisi dan strategi muncul daripada data, termasuk menyelaraskan usaha pengumpulan dana dengan matlamat institusi, meningkatkan kesedaran tentang filantropi, menyediakan peluang latihan dan pembangunan, serta melaksanakan sistem ganjaran dan pengiktirafan untuk meningkatkan pengumpulan dana. Kajian ini menghasilkan pembangunan Kerangka Kerja Kompetensi Kepimpinan Pengumpulan Dana Filantropi Bersepadu (IPFLC) yang direka untuk Institusi Pendidikan Tinggi Awam dalam konteks Malaysia. Kerangka kerja bersepadu ini mengintegrasikan kemahiran, tingkah laku, latihan, dan pengiktirafan yang diperlukan untuk kepimpinan universiti awam dalam pengumpulan dana yang berkesan. Dari segi teori, penyelidikan ini menyumbang konstruk baru kepada Resource Dependency Theory, General System Theory, dan Social Exchange Theory dengan menyerlahkan pemimpin akademik dan pentadbiran university sebagai rakan strategik berpotensi bagi HEI dalam mengatasi cabaran kewangan semasa dan mencapai kelestarian jangka panjang. Dari segi praktikal, cadangan kajian ini mempunyai kepentingan besar bagi kerajaan, pembuat dasar, dan ketua institusi pendidikan tinggi untuk merancang strategi dan polisi bagi memupuk pemimpin akademik dan pentadbiran dalam pengumpulan dana filantropi di HEI bagi

menghadapi cabaran kewangan dan berusaha mencapai kelestarian kewangan jangka panjang.

CULTIVATING ACADEMIC AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEADERSHIP FOR PHILANTHROPIC FUNDRAISING: A COMPETENCY FRAMEWORK FOR FUNDRAISERS IN MALAYSIAN RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES

ABSTRACT

Over the past few decades, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) worldwide are looking for alternate sources of financing due to reduced state fundings. PHEIs in Malaysia are also facing fiscal challenges after declining state support since 2015 and striving to meet the deficit through alternate sources of financing. Philanthropy has emerged as a viable funding alternative for Malaysian public higher education institutions. Although philanthropy in education has long historical tradition, but in recent decades greater attention has been directed toward the roles of leadership in fundraising efforts along with institutional development offices to increase its outcomes. The purpose of this study was to explore the role of academic and administrative leaders in fundraising and develop a competency framework with requisite competencies, skills, and behaviours suitable for HEI leadership in philanthropic fundraising. Guided by an interpretivist research philosophy, the research focused on a Malaysian public research university as a case study to explore this phenomenon. The data of this study was collected through primary and secondary sources both. Primary data was collected using a basic qualitative methodology and through semi-structured interviews with 20 participants including 16 x HEIs leaders and 4 x major donors. Secondary data were obtained through case study university annual statements, websites and fundraising promotional material. Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo Version 12 software to analyse the data. The findings indicated that both academic and administrative leaders are aware of funding

reductions and play significant roles in fundraising activities. Academic leaders tend to assume leading roles in these efforts, while administrative leaders primarily facilitate fundraising initiatives. Several policies and strategies emerged from the data, including aligning fundraising efforts with institutional goals, creating awareness about philanthropy, providing training and development opportunities, and implementing reward and recognition systems to enhance fundraising. The study resulted in the development of an Integrated Philanthropic Fundraising Leadership Competency (IPFLC) Framework designed for Public Higher Education Institutions within the Malaysian context. This integrated framework integrates skills, behaviours, training, and recognition needed for effective fundraising public university leadership. Theoretically, this research contributes new constructs to Resource Dependency Theory, General System Theory, and Social Exchange Theory by presenting academic and administrative leaders as potential strategic partners for HEIs in overcoming current financial challenges and achieving long-term sustainability. Practically the study's recommendation carries significant weightage for government, policy makers and heads of higher education institutions to devise strategies and policies to nurture academic and administrative leaders in philanthropic fundraising at HEIs to meet financial challenges and strive for long-term financial sustainability.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a detailed introduction to the study, starting with the background of the study delineating the challenges faced by higher education institutions due to funding constraints, followed by an exploration of philanthropy and the state of fundraising efforts in Malaysian public higher education institutions and Malaysian public research universities. It subsequently outlines the research aim, problem statement, the objectives of the research, and the key research questions, providing a clear insight into its intent. The chapter also underscores the importance and scope of the study, highlighting the urgent need to address the competency gap in both academic and administrative leaders of public higher education institutions. The chapter concludes with definitions of key terms and a summary of the thesis structure.

1.2 Background of the Study

In the 21st century, educational institutions all around the world are coping with a new set of issues and challenges. These encompass the growing demand for higher education, intense competition, embracing digital transformation for academic excellence, and navigating changing environments (Aithal et al., 2024). Specifically, the COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped the higher education arena, highlighting the necessity for adaptability and resilience as key drivers of achievement and sustainability (Pavlov & Katsamakos, 2021; Sengupta, 2023). The provision of adequate funding and resources has emerged as a crucial challenge for the financial

sustainability and continuity of higher education institutions (Abad-Segura & González-Zamar, 2021; Biancardi et al., 2023).

Globally education budget is in significant size, with the education market estimated at around US\$7.6 trillion, and governments accounting for 60–70% of total education expenditure (Education Intelligence, 2025). Over the past two decades, state funding for public universities has continued to be reduced and put upward pressure on tuition fees due to certain political, social, and economic factors (Mitchell et al., 2017). The main reason is that public universities primarily rely on government funding for their operations, whereas private universities generate most of their income independently and have minimal dependence on government support. Hence private universities are less vulnerable than public universities in term of financial sustainability due funding reduction from government. Dwindling of funding for public universities is also posing challenges for the nations to attain the sustainable development goal of “quality education” charted by the United Nation (Allais et al., 2020; Chapungu & Nhamo, 2024). Consequently, Public higher education institutions (PHEIs) are under enormous pressure to change how they obtain and manage finances. Thus, several states in the world are administering PHEIs to find new ways to raise money in the face of continuing drop in government support (Kayembe & Nel, 2019; MEB, 2015).

Philanthropy has emerged as a significant financial stream across the globe that has the potential to lessen the burden of providing financial resources over the shoulders of governments (Drezner, 2018). Commonly recognized philanthropic instruments endowment, waqaf, and zakat funds (Islamic religious donations) are now widely used for maintaining financial sustainability of higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in many countries, including Malaysia (Hasbullah & Ab Rahman, 2024).

Harvard University's is well renowned for its endowment assets valued at \$53.2 billion as of June 30, 2024, is the largest academic endowment in the world. It comprises of approximately 14,600 individual funds, most of which are donor centric for specific purposes such as financial aid, faculty positions, research, and academic programs.

As state financing for public universities is continuously reducing, philanthropic fundraising is becoming essential for PHEIs to operate effectively and remain competitive (Rohayati et al., 2016). According to Hommerová and Severová (2019), fundraising is a systematic activity of securing financial resources for the organization.

The Oxford Dictionary defines philanthropy as "the desire to enhance the benefit of others, particularly through the generous contribution of money to a good cause." Most scholars have explained philanthropy as an effort individual or organization carries out based on the altruistic desire to improve human welfare (Dodgson et al., 2020). Philanthropy funding is often used to describe the act of donating money, goods, or services to a charitable cause for the greater welfare of the community (Chen, 2021). Thus, philanthropic donations can play an important role in higher education by sponsoring academic programs, research initiatives, and student scholarships. There are several fundraising models and strategies that educational institutions around the world widely use. Four different models for philanthropic fundraising are broadly embraced by HEIs worldwide to attract donations (European Commission, 2008). These models include (1) Alumni Model, (2) Major Gift Model, (3) Foundation Research Model, (4) Multi-Mode Model. These models has been characterized for higher education institutions with respect to their interaction with prospect donors that include university administration leading role, the degree of donor involvement in utilization of donation, the formalities of donors procedures and the

research specificity of the fundraising activities of universities (European Commission, 2008). In an era of dwindling state support, universities and colleges rely on philanthropic donations to improve their facilities, recruit the best faculties, and provide students with a quality education (Wiepking et al., 2021).

In the Malaysian context, Between 2007 and around 2016, public universities faced significant budget cuts, in addition to rising education expenses and targeting to manage the budgetary gap through philanthropy (Cheuk, 2021). These reductions were part of the government's efforts to rationalize expenditure and encourage universities to become more financially independent through tuition fees and other revenue sources. The Malaysian government has carried out some deregulations to encourage universities to explore alternate sources of financing and achieve financial sustainability by attracting and promoting philanthropy (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016). Studies have shown that philanthropy is an untapped and viable funding alternative for Malaysian research universities, especially for research-related activities (Ahmad, Ismail, & Siraj, 2019; Ahmad, Siraj, & Ismail, 2019; Haseeb, 2018; Rohayati et al., 2016). Therefore, it has become vital for public institutions in Malaysia to focus on philanthropy as the potential source of funding to offset the effects of declining state support.

Philanthropy supports PHEIs to stay financially stable. Therefore, top leaders of these educational institutions increasingly require employees from departments other than those responsible for institutional advancement activities to take part in fundraising activities (Stephens, 2004). This notion stresses the extent of involvement of PHEI administrative and academic leaders and their constituents in fundraising to make it more successful. Dove (2001) discussed that the fundraising process should involve the entire organization, not just the development personnel, for more effective

results. Therefore, the mandate of these university's leadership role in achieving successful fundraising outcomes takes on significant importance. Understanding how effective leadership can influence fundraising strategies and initiatives is crucial for the institution's financial sustainability and growth. Considering that many Malaysian PHEIs are facing significant challenges in effectively tapping into this potential stream of revenue to bolster their financial resources, it raises the question of whether the leaders of these universities have the necessary expertise and skills to engage in fundraising efforts successfully. Hence, what are the key elements of the philanthropic fundraising leadership competencies framework that can significantly enhance the leadership competencies and skills of leaders in PHEIs?

1.2.1 Philanthropic Leadership in Public Higher Education Institutions

PHEIs in the world are recognising the growing importance of philanthropy in meeting institutions' funding needs (Drezner & Huehls, 2014; Warren & Bell, 2014). Studies have shown that most PHEIs from developed countries have demonstrated enormous success in philanthropic fundraising (Johnstone, 2016). However, many others are still struggling to succeed, considering this potential stream benefits (Elliott, 2006). Consequently, university leaders hold a crucial responsibility in fostering philanthropic initiatives, as public support can emerge as a vital source of funding for PHEIs.

Due to the growing need for additional resources from private sources, HEIs must involve experts from several functions to target and obtain resources from donors (Conley, 2017). Since fundraising is a team effort, presidents and officials from the institutional advancement, the office responsible for managing the institution's philanthropy agenda, may find it challenging to do in isolation. They require support

from other departments in this regard. This condition stimulated that academic and administrative leadership in higher education institutions, in addition to their core responsibilities, needs to play their role in offsetting the budgetary gap and improving financial sustainability. There has been a growing expectation across the globe that educational institutions should acquire funding from non-traditional sources (Haseeb, (2018).

According to Kundzina and Rivza (2020), administrative and academic leaders of colleges and universities must invest their efforts in fundraising. However, the biggest challenge that administrative and academic leadership faces is that they have limited knowledge and expertise in relation to philanthropic fundraising. Not many academic deans and leaders have previous experience in development or have enough grasp of the theory and practice of successful development operations (Krahenbuhl, 2004; Nehls, 2012; Wolverson et al., 2001). Most academic deans and administrative leaders have made their careers as scholars and functional experts, and they are not prepared to engage in fund-raising activities on behalf of the university. This context makes it necessary to do additional study and development in philanthropy from the point of view of academic and administrative leaders' roles in philanthropic fundraising to improve the institution's financial sustainability.

There was a dearth of literature available on philanthropy from the context of philanthropic leadership in PHEI. However, over the past few decades, researchers and scholars have focused on philanthropic contribution growth, its role, and its impact on the performance of institutions (Cascione, 2004; Drezner, 2018). Some studies have been undertaken on institutional internal and external environmental factors associated with philanthropy (Breeze et al., 2011; Williamson & Luke, 2021). While many other studies focused on the identification, cultivation, solicitation, and stewardship of

donors, their giving behaviours, or their intentions to give from the perspective of higher education institutions (Baker, 2017; Jalali et al., 2022; Penney, 2022; Worth et al., 2019).

This finding has led to the purpose of this study. Leaders play critical roles in the fundraising process. Jackson (2012) and Satterwhite (2004) examined the functions of presidents in the fundraising process in higher education settings by identifying several themes related to the president's behaviour within multiple tasks that include strategic planning, coordinating external stakeholders, building teams, coordinating internal stakeholders, directing the fund-raising process, and allocating resources to achieve fundraising goals. Therefore, the advancement of knowledge and practices concerning their role, characteristics, styles, and expertise is crucial to understanding from the perspective of higher education to achieve effectiveness in fundraising through efficiency.

Nicholson (2007), on the other hand, argued that to be successful in fundraising, university presidents use transactional and transformational roles as functional leadership styles that align with the transformative leadership concept introduced by Bornstein (2003). According to the presidents, vice presidents, and major donors who took part in the study of Bornstein (2003) acknowledged that one way of leading doesn't replace another. The findings of Bornstein (2003) research support the idea that a combination of transactional and transformational leadership styles is optimal for bringing about the desired higher-order change in the relationship between leader and donor during the fundraising process. As a result of the growing importance of private funding, philanthropic fundraising is becoming increasingly important to the work of other institutional leaders at academic institutions (Jalali et al., 2022).

The preceding discourse has underscored the significance of the involvement of academic and administrative leaders in philanthropic fundraising efforts. Despite this acknowledgment, no empirical evidence exists in the current body of literature pertaining to the determinants of the evolving role of academic and administrative leaders in philanthropic fundraising aimed at enhancing the financial sustainability of PHEIs. This situation leads to an important inquiry: "What specific skills are essential for leaders of Research-Intensive Public Universities to engage in fundraising efforts effectively?" Understanding these skills is crucial for enhancing fundraising strategies that can support the growth and sustainability of educational programs, research, innovations, and other initiatives

Therefore, this research aims to contribute original insights to scholarly discourse while guiding academic and administrative leaders on the philanthropic fundraising leadership competencies framework that is essential for effective PHEIs success.

1.3 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study was from the context of income generation initiatives through philanthropy in Malaysia PHEIs, specifically in the Research-Intensive Universities context. Given the consistent reduction in government funding for public universities in Malaysia over recent decades (Abdullah, 2017), PHEIs can no longer rely solely on government allocations to cover their expenses. There is an urgent need for Malaysian PHEIs to diversify their revenue streams to bridge the funding gap (Usman & Ab Rahman, 2023). Thus, directing attention towards philanthropic contributions as an alternative funding source is imperative for Malaysian PHEIs (Jaafar et al., 2023). Consequently, Malaysian PHEIs must enhance their fundraising

activities, cultivate relationships, and make partnerships to solicit private philanthropic support in pursuit of their institutional objectives and to achieve academic excellence. Therefore, investigating the role of academic and administrative leaders in philanthropic fundraising initiatives aimed at enhancing the financial sustainability of PHEIs is imperative.

1.4 Context of the Study

Malaysia Public Research Universities (MRUs) possess various characteristics that are crucial for a comprehensive examination of the philanthropic fundraising leadership competencies framework in the context of Malaysian PHEIs. Key characteristics of MRUs include their age, which affects institutional development; their size, which influences outreach and resource availability; governance structures that determine decision-making processes; diverse funding sources that ensure financial sustainability; established procedures for managing donations; and the resources available to support effective fundraising efforts. These factors make MRUs a fitting subject for study within the Malaysian PHEIs context. As a result, an institution that meets the specific criteria outlined for this study was selected as the case study. This institution was chosen based on its alignment with the research objectives and its demonstrated capacity to contribute valuable insights to the study.

1.4.1 Malaysia PHEIs Funding and Philanthropic Fundraising

Malaysian PHEIs need to be able to maintain their financial health to ensure that all students have equal access to a high-quality education, strategic objectives can be met, and higher education can be provided at an affordable cost (Abdullah, 2017a; Ganapathy, 2016). Study shows that before 2007 state government was extending 90

percent of the budget to PHEIs. In contrast, universities themselves generated 10 percent of the budget through tuition fees and other self-generated income initiatives (Abdullah, 2017). According to the study, this situation has become more challenging since 2007, when the government gradually reduced the budget for universities to 70 percent. The circumstances have prompted Malaysian universities to develop strategies to close the gap by seeking alternative income sources. These additional sources of income are essential not only for maintaining financial stability but also for ensuring that institutions can continue to provide high-quality research outcomes and educational experiences for their diverse student populations.

Many public universities in the world have shown incredible success in philanthropy and emphasised that fundraising is a team effort rather than the responsibility of a single department or some individuals (Nyman et al., 2018). It requires leadership, cultivation, thanking, and stewardship (Carlson & Clarke, 2000) for philanthropic success. Leadership plays a pivotal role in setting the vision and direction for fundraising initiatives, ensuring that all stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities within the broader fundraising strategy (Gigliotti & Ruben, 2017). The role of academic and administrative leadership in the fundraising activities in alliance with the Institutional Advancement Office (IAO) will enhance fundraising and ultimately lead to improving the financial sustainability of PHEIs in Malaysia. Studies have shown that philanthropy is an untapped and viable funding alternative for Malaysian Research Universities (MRUs) (Ahmad, Ismail, et al., 2019; Ahmad, Siraj, et al., 2019; Haseeb, 2018).

1.4.2 The State of Malaysian Public Research Universities Funding and Philanthropic Fundraising

The MRUs consist of a select group of universities aimed at advancing research and innovation initiatives. Five public universities have been designated with research university status, which include the University of Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia, and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia. The remaining fifteen public universities are classified as either comprehensive or focus universities. MRUs were intended to rank among the top 100 universities globally, thereby serving as models for Malaysian universities (Sheriff & Abdullah, 2017).

The MRUs represent the leading institutions of higher education in the country. These universities have established a solid reputation over the past 50 years and are noted for their significant contributions to research and academia (Sheriff, 2017). The MRU boasts a diverse student enrolment of an average of over 30,000, creating a vibrant campus community. Additionally, they have cultivated a vast network of alumni, exceeding 100,000 graduates who have made notable impacts in various fields. These institutions consistently rank among the top five universities nationally, underscoring their excellence in education, research, and student outcomes.

MRUs were granted the autonomy to independently oversee their institutions, which included taking charge of fiscal management. As institutions that prioritise research, MRUs require substantial funding to not only increase the volume of their research output but also to enhance the quality of the researchers, the research findings, and the number of postgraduate students they produce. In recognition of this need, the government has provided supplementary funding specifically aimed at supporting the research and innovation activities undertaken by these universities, as outlined by

Amran et al. (2014). The funding sources for MRUs are diversified into three main streams of income: first, government allocations; second, revenue generated through tuition fees collected from students; and third, funds derived from charitable endowments, *Waqaf*, *Zakat*, and *Infaq*, endowments, commercial activities, and various grants. *Waqaf*, *Zakat*, and *Infaq* represent different types of charitable contributions in Islam (Awang et al., 2017). Together, these instruments form a comprehensive system of financial mechanisms in Islam aimed at facilitating the fair redistribution of wealth and promoting social welfare within communities (Riani, 2021). In line with the government's long-term vision, there is an ongoing initiative aimed at encouraging the MRUs, to enhance their second and third revenue streams. This situation would involve a concerted effort to reduce their reliance on government financing while promoting a more self-sufficient financial model in the future.

Fundraising has become essential to sustain research excellence, infrastructure development, and global competitiveness. Therefore, MRUs have started to develop comprehensive advancement portfolios and establish foundations dedicated to fundraising activities (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016). This initiative marks a significant shift in how these institutions approach financial sustainability and community engagement. Despite the notable recognition of philanthropy's potential among Malaysian PHEIs, the disparity remains evident, leading to limited empirical research regarding these institutions effectively harnessing the advantages of substantial donations from alumni and other benefactors. The of these universities continue to struggle with effectively tapping into this resource, highlighting a need for more strategic efforts to cultivate relationships with potential donors and foster a culture of giving within the educational landscape. This scenario resulted in the current challenge confronting the leadership of the MRUs in encouraging its academic and

administrative leaders to raise funds for the university and prepare them for the task ahead.

1.5 Problem Statement

The global higher education operations are experiencing unprecedented growth, driven by several factors that include the growing demand for higher education due to expanding middle classes, globalization, and the need for a skilled workforce in knowledge-based economies. Technological advancements, changing student expectations, and the pursuit of internationalization have also fuelled this growth. Declining governmental financial budget for public universities over the past 10 years has exerted significant upward pressure on tuition fees, a situation shaped by evolving political, social, and economic landscapes (Modugno & Di Carlo, 2019).

The rising expenses of higher education and the government's reduced funding have created challenges for Malaysia's Research Universities (Cheuk, 2021; Jaafar et al., 2023). MRUs need to be financially sustainable so that everyone can have access to quality education, as chartered by the sustainable development goal of the United Nations at an affordable cost (Cuesta-Claros, Bonar, Malekpour, Raven, & Kestin, 2024). This challenge has left MRU needing to seek alternative funding sources to maintain operations and sustain its research ambitions. Consequently, MRUs are actively seeking supplementary sources of income to mitigate the shortfall in funding resulting from reductions in state government funding. The Universities Institutional Advancement Offices (IAOs) that are responsible for exploring various philanthropic funding avenues are playing pivotal roles in developing and implementing strategies to secure additional financial support for the institution. (Weerts & Hudson, 2009a).

Following the vision of MoHE, the universities' IAOs have taken several initiatives to enhance their financial resources through income generation initiatives that include university commercial activities, grant acquisitions, and philanthropy initiatives to alleviate funds deficiency (Ministry of Higher Education, 2016). Studies have witnessed that Philanthropic fundraising significantly enhances university autonomy by expanding financial resources beyond government control, allowing institutions greater freedom to set priorities, allocate funds, and innovate (Khan, Ghulam Mustafa, & Nawaz, 2021). However, the growing demand for financial resources and environmental uncertainties witness that the efforts of the IAOs are not enough solely to meet the funding gap. This situation has compelled the academic and administrative leadership of PHEIs to recognise the importance of engaging in philanthropic fundraising endeavours in conjunction with their primary duties, thereby collaborating with institutional advancement to bridge the budgetary shortfall. As described by Kundzina and Rivza (2020), the leadership of colleges and universities must invest efforts in fundraising for the institution's sustainability.

There have been a few studies that have looked into the topic of fundraising from the point of view of the roles, behaviours, and styles of academic and administrative leaders in order to synergize better the results of philanthropic fundraising (Jarvis & Mishra, 2020; Mamiseishvili, 2018; Satterwhite, 2004). However, limited studies have been undertaken to date that empirically examine the role of academic and administrative leaders in PHEI fundraising activities from the Malaysian perspective.

Generally, academic leaders have closer interaction with the students and faculty members, so it is assumed that they can more effectively persuade donors (i.e., alumni, industry partners, grants sponsors) and prospective donors (active students)

for fundraising by communicating the actual needs of the institutions (Hodson, 2010). The tenure of their position in the institution is usually prolonged as compared to the president and vice-chancellors of the university. Additionally, they can inspire their subordinates to participate in fundraising activities to enhance the effectiveness of the fundraising process.

However, many academic and administrative leaders have inadequate experience and knowledge in fundraising before their appointment. These leaders have built their careers as academicians and experts in their fields, and they know little or nothing about fundraising and perform fundraising activities based on their intuition and general knowledge. Therefore, performing extraordinarily in fundraising initiatives is challenging for these leaders due to a lack of fundraising competencies, skills, and behaviors. Clevenger (2016) stated that leaders must have a toolbox filled with expertise to be effective in fundraising.

Hence, this study has investigated the emerging role of academic and administrative leaders, specifically concerning the increasing demand for their proficiency and efficacy in fundraising endeavors. This research aimed to strengthen the ability of academic and administrative personnel in PHEIs to serve as fundraisers by identifying the essential competencies and skills required for them to raise funds for the university effectively. Furthermore, this study has developed a leadership framework for philanthropic fundraising for PHEI, delineating the necessary skills, competencies, and leadership behaviors to optimise fundraising results in collaboration with other institutional actors.

1.6 Aim of the Study

The main aim of this research study was to develop a philanthropic fundraising leadership competency framework for PHEI's academic and administrative in enhancing financial sustainability. This study holds unique importance by outlining the essential skills, competencies, behaviors, and leadership responsibilities required for academic and administrative leaders to optimise fundraising outcomes in collaboration with institutional advancement efforts. This framework is expected to serve as a blueprint for similar public universities, guiding them in enhancing their fundraising initiatives. Additionally, the research has explored the effective strategies employed by academic and administrative leaders at a Malaysian Public Research University to strengthen their institution's financial stability in the face of steadily decreasing state funding.

1.7 Research Objectives

The following are the objectives of the study.

1. To explore the Academic and Administrative leaders' role as MRUs philanthropic fundraisers to enhance financial sustainability.
2. To investigate the institutional fundraiser competency policy and strategy regarding Academic and Administrative Leaders.
3. To develop a philanthropic fundraising competency framework for MRU's Academic and administrative leaders.

1.8 Research Questions

Based on the problem of practice, the objectives of the study, which looked at the relationship between the ongoing drop in funding for PHEIs and the expectation

that administrative and academic leadership in HEI should be good and skilled at philanthropic fundraising to achieve financial sustainability, the following research questions have been posited to guide the study.

1. What is the role(s) of academic and administrative leaders in raising funds for the case study university?
2. How do philanthropic policies and strategies of the case study institutions encourage Academic and Administrative Leaders in fundraising activities?
3. What are the features of a philanthropic fundraising competency framework for MRU Academic and Administrative leadership?

1.9 Scope of the Study

The scope of this study is related to income generation initiative of Malaysian public research universities in the era of diminishing governmental support and increasing cost of operations. This study is confined to exploring the cultivation of academic and administrative leadership for philanthropic fundraising within Malaysia's public higher education institutions. It focuses on identifying and integrating the essential skills, behaviours, and institutional supports required to enhance fundraising leadership, encompassing both generic competencies such as leadership, communication, adaptability and functional competencies, including financial acumen, donor engagement, and strategic thinking. The research also examined the influence of institutional factors such as policies, strategies, training programs, and reward mechanisms on leaders' fundraising capacity, ending in the development of the Integrated Philanthropic Fundraising Leadership Competency (IPFLC) Framework tailored to the Malaysian public higher education context.

1.10 Significance of the Study

This study underscored the necessity for the professional development of present and prospective PHEI's academic and administrative leaders to enhance their fundraising performance for their institution's financial sustainability. The insights gleaned from this study contributed beneficial information to address the fundraising challenges at PHEIs from various perspectives. Therefore, it holds multipronged significance from theoretical, empirical, and knowledge perspectives.

1.10.1 Theoretical Significance

This research enriches existing theory that formed the foundation of this study, Resource Dependency Theory, General System Theory, and Social Exchange Theory. At first, it contributed theoretically to Resource Dependency Theory by emphasises the importance of leaders' roles in supporting institution goals. In the context of this study, the leaders' roles in securing philanthropic contributions to reduce reliance on government support are evident. Secondly, the need for seamless integration of all constituencies in the organisation to meet organisational targets as highlighted by the General System Theory is supported. The success of fundraising efforts lies upon the cooperation among various PHEIs departments. Finally, Social Exchange Theory, where the study underscores the importance of PHEI leaders in building reciprocal, trust-based relationships with donors to sustain long-term philanthropic support and fundraising success

Furthermore, the research enhances understanding of the leadership roles, skills, and behaviours essential for effective fundraising efforts in PHEIs, grounded in the interrelationship of these three theories that constitute the theoretical framework of

the study. This study also identified best practices, theoretical understanding, and practical knowledge in the field of fundraising from the HEIs perspective.

1.10.2 Practical Significance

The study provides valuable data and insights derived from the findings, explaining the importance of leadership roles and their impact on the financial sustainability of public higher education.

(i) Educational Institutions

This study holds significant importance as it comes up with key competencies, behaviours, and skill sets necessary for cultivating effective leadership in philanthropic fundraising at public universities in Malaysia. By developing a comprehensive leadership philanthropic fundraising competency framework, this research provides valuable insights for university policymakers and leaders regarding the essential skills, knowledge levels, and expertise required to train existing and prospective academic and administrative leaders to become successful fundraisers. The philanthropic fundraising competency framework established in this study serves as a roadmap for how these leaders should engage in the fundraising process to achieve both effectiveness and efficiency. It outlines specific competencies such as communication skills, relationship-building abilities, grant-writing expertise, financial acumen, and adaptability. Furthermore, it emphasises core behaviours critical for PHEIs leadership engagement in fundraising, including empathy, integrity, and facilitation. Additionally, this study is poised to assist PHEIs in lessening their reliance on government resources by fostering additional funds generated through philanthropic fundraising, thereby reducing their reliance on public funds.

(ii) Government

The study also has significance from the government perspective as it helps the government policymakers to design policies that prioritise higher education leadership development, equipping academic and administrative leaders with the skills necessary to execute effective fundraising initiatives in supporting the national higher education agenda. It can also guide the government in formulating policies for the appointment of Vice Chancellors with a strong focus on fundraising capabilities, as institutional leaders with the right competency and skill are imperative for successful fundraising. The research highlights the necessity of cultivating strategic collaborations among universities, industries, and philanthropic organizations, which can aid the government in policy formulation to support philanthropic contributions to PHEIs. This study supports the government policy shift towards PHEIs self-sufficiency through philanthropy which can contribute to significant resource savings for governments. As a result, the government can allocate the saved resources for other community benefits. The current policy regarding support for philanthropic contributions to PHEIs presents an opportunity for further examination and improvement. Specifically, the implementation of tax incentives aimed at encouraging such contributions could be re-evaluated and enhanced to incentivise individuals and organisations better to provide financial support to PHEIs.

(iii) Community

From a community perspective, the financial sustainability of PHEIs is pivotal for delivering quality social services to the community in alignment with the sustainable development goal of quality education (SDG 4) (Allais et al., 2020). Additional revenue generated through philanthropic fundraising can be channelled

towards enhancing facilities, offering scholarships, enriching academic programs, and bridging funding gaps, ultimately enhancing the quality of education provided to students. Furthermore, this study serves to cultivate a philanthropic culture, encouraging individuals and organisations to support educational institutions, thus benefiting society at large. Additionally, by offering a wide range of tax incentives, the government can greatly boost philanthropic investment in PHEIs. This initiative will elevate voluntary public contributions to meet the growing financial demands of PHEIs for quality education programs that serve the larger community, resulting in a more efficient workforce and enhancing the nation's economy.

1.11 Operational Terms Definition

Following are the definitions of terms and concepts used in the study.

Philanthropy

Philanthropy can be defined as the act of giving one's time, money, or other resources to improve the quality of life of other people without expecting anything in return (Chen, 2021).

Giving to Education

Contributing to education involves providing financial assistance to educational institutions with the goal of improving their missions and influence on society (Waterman, 2018).

Advancement

The process of raising awareness and garnering support from all an organization's constituent organizations and activities, such as fundraising, public relations, and government relations (Aguilar, 2022; Drezner & Huehls, 2014).

Development Officer

The development officer, or university fundraiser, is responsible for creating and executing a long-term strategy to increase financial support for the institution (Barnes, 2015).

Donation

Donations are typically financial contributions made to charitable organizations, which allow the giver to reduce their taxable income potentially. In the context of this investigation, the terms gift and donation can be used interchangeably (Ajita & Singh, 2007).

Institutional Advancement Office

A department within a university that manages donations and fundraising. Scholarships, academic programs, faculty assistance and research, unrestricted grants, and many other forms of financial aid. Within this study, the term advancement and development can be used interchangeably (Weerts & Hudson, 2009b).

Academic Leader

The Academic leader is in charge of overseeing the various aspects of the institution, including its staff, finances, academic programs, facilities, space, academic affairs, and development (Gallos & Bolman, 2021).

Administrative Leader

Administrative leaders in universities are responsible for overseeing and managing the day-to-day operations of the university, such as personnel, finances, and organizational structure. They also provide vision and guidance to ensure the university meets its goals and objectives (Veles et al., 2023).

1.12 Structure of the Thesis

This research thesis has been organised into seven chapters, together with a list of attachments that consists of a set of Appendices and a list of References.

Chapter 1 – Introduction: In the initial section of Chapter 1, the researcher explained the financial situation of PHEIs in the world with the growing importance of philanthropy and emphasized the significance of leadership roles in philanthropic fundraising against the backdrop of diminishing government financial support. An exhaustive discussion on fundraising activities within Malaysian PHEIs follows. The study's background explored alternative revenue sources, notably philanthropy, to address the financial sustainability challenges faced by PHEIs, incorporating insights from leading PHEIs in developed nations. Subsequently, a comprehensive analysis ensued regarding the state of fundraising endeavours in Malaysian PHEIs, with particular emphasis on academic and administrative leadership roles. This discussion was succeeded by the description of the Problem statement, objectives, and research

questions, alongside an explanation of the study's scope, significance, contributions, and the definition of pertinent terminologies employed throughout the thesis.

Chapter Two - Literature Review: This chapter presents a review of the literature on philanthropy fundraising, a brief history of philanthropy, and the emergence of philanthropy in public higher education institutions. The role of organizational actors and the performance is also discussed to guide the readers. In addition, this chapter discusses models and strategies for conducting philanthropic funding. This chapter places a strong emphasis on the ways in which these elements relate to and complement the internal and external fund-raising processes and procedures of public institutions of higher education.

Chapter Three – Methodology: This chapter provides a detailed analysis of the research methodology used in this work. It begins by discussing different worldviews, research paradigms, and the research design that was selected, as well as examining different philosophical stances that are relevant to the research process. The chapter explores the sampling strategy in more detail. It ends with a thorough analysis of the techniques used for data collection analysis and the themes that emerged from the study. This chapter also discusses how ethical principles maintained during the research process are integrated with measures of reliability.

Chapter Four- Result of Research Question One: This chapter unveils the outcomes of the study, related to the first research question showcasing the authentic perspectives of both administrative and academic leaders. The chapter commences by delineating the profiles of the research participants. Subsequently, the findings are articulated in accordance with the sequence of the research inquiries, specifically addressing the following research questions. This chapter has also presented the