Responsible leadership in higher education in developing countries

Islam, M. S., Fujimoto, Y., Haque, A. and Uddin, M.

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Responsible leadership is crucial for Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in developing countries to build institutional reputation by generating advanced knowledge and strengthening socioeconomic development. Drawing on signaling theory, this study investigates the relationship between responsible leadership and academics' job insecurity, and examines the mediating role of institutional reputation in public and private universities in Bangladesh. The study highlights the differing impacts of responsible leadership on job insecurity in HEIs. Notably, responsible leadership was found to reduce job insecurity in private universities, while it increased in public universities. Institutional reputation, however, played a significant role in mitigating job insecurity in public universities, a trend not observed in private universities. By investigating a model of university RL on JI and comparing the public and private sectors in Bangladesh, this study advances our understanding of the complex relationship between RL and JI in HE within developing countries. Specifically, in a private university, responsible leaders who interact with faculty members in ethical and responsive manners reduce academics' job insecurity, whereas in public universities, it is only possible by building institutional reputation. Our findings have important implications for HE leaders who aspire to strengthen the development of HEIs in developing countries and to enhance national well-being and the economy.

Introduction

The primary objective of higher education (HE) is to generate advanced knowledge and enhance capacity for socioeconomic development, poverty alleviation, and good governance within a country (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007; Heleta & Bagus, 2021). However, the Global Innovation Index of 2022 revealed that knowledge production is predominantly dominated by high-income countries, while higher education institutions (HEIs) in developing countries remain neglected and inadequately supported by national and international policymakers (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007; WIPO, 2022). This phenomenon depletes resources and compromises the quality of HEIs in developing countries, hindering their contribution to growth and sustainable development (Heleta & Bagus, 2021).

To achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4.3 of providing equal global access to affordable and quality technical, vocational, and tertiary education, including universities, by 2030, responsible leadership (RL) within HEIs is crucial for improving the quality of knowledge creation and development in developing countries (Heleta & Bagus, 2021). RL entails establishing and maintaining solid relationships with all relevant stakeholders through inclusive practices (Maak & Pless, 2006) within HEIs, fostering institutional reputation and employee well-being (PRME, 2022). In developing countries, there has been a substantial increase in the demand for HEIs due to the significant expansion of primary and secondary education (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007). Developing countries often establish branch

campuses with Western universities to internationalize their HE. However, while this trend may not guarantee the strengthening a localized knowledge economy, these partnerships and alliances among local HEIs with the presence of RL can potentially enhance joint learning practices for addressing SDGs in developing countries (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007; Heleta & Bagus, 2021).

Oplatka (2017) emphasizes that RL in knowledge production benefits society by shifting the focus from merely student achievements in HE to a broader perspective that promotes the common good and challenges dominant market-driven views of education. Based on signaling theory, we posit that RL in HEIs (Connelly et al., 2011) can promote ethical and relational relationships within and beyond HEIs. This promotion of collaboration, inclusion, and cooperation with stakeholders can, in turn, mitigate academics' job insecurity by enhancing institutional reputation (IR) (c.f., Laufer et al., 2021). Despite the potential significance of RL in HEIs in developed and developing countries, limited research has been conducted on this topic. This study aims to investigate the effect of RL on mitigating academics' job insecurity (JI) in HEIs by enhancing IR within the context of Bangladesh (Figure 1).

Based on signaling theory (c.f., Connelly et al., 2011), RL practices can serve as mechanisms to signal inclusive values to stakeholders, including employees, and reduce negative attitudes such as JI in developing countries. These mechanisms can strengthen the institutional capacity of local HEIs (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007). For instance, leaders in HE, such as vice-chancellors, can use positive signals to demonstrate their commitment to valuing the perspectives of stakeholders, particularly academics, while enhancing their institutional reputations (Aras et al., 2022). These signals can be interpreted by academics as evidence of the leader's inclusive values and priorities, thus reducing negative attitudes (Islam & Haque, 2022). In developing countries, there are significant contextual differences between public and private universities that present different leadership challenges. Table I illustrates the major differences between Bangladeshi private and public universities, shedding light on the leadership challenges in each institution to promote JI. For instance, leaders in private universities prioritize financial sustainability, prompting concerns among academics regarding budget constraints affecting their salaries, benefits, and job security. Conversely, leaders in public universities may grapple with bureaucratic complexities, resulting in uncertainties about promotion opportunities, job stability, and academic freedom. Furthermore, disparities in campus facilities and political involvement exacerbate JI, with academics including leaders in public universities facing uncertainties about resource availability and potential disruptions from political

activities. Conversely, those in private institutions may worry about resource limitations and challenges in maintaining IR (Chowdhury et al., 2021). In both institutions, Bangladeshi academics need to feel secure about their jobs under responsible leaders who recognize them as crucial stakeholders for contributing effectively to local knowledge and skills, yet in different ways. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of RL on academics' JI in HEIs in Bangladesh, covering private and public universities.

Insert Table 1About Here

JI pertains to employees' concerns and doubts about potentially losing their current jobs or becoming unemployed shortly (Loi et al., 2012). During the period of this study, the Covid-19 pandemic further intensified JI among academics in Bangladesh. This was characterized by increased workloads, lack of governance, disruptions to routines, and challenges posed by restricted access to online teaching or learning (Islam & Haque, 2022; Neazy, 2021; Roshid et al., 2022).

While existing research on HEIs has shown that implementing RL practices leads to positive outcomes such as enhanced psychological contracts, teaching satisfaction, knowledge development collaboration, and academic engagement (Islam & Haque, 2022; Mousa, 2020), there remains a gap in the effects of RL on JI within HEIs in developing countries. To address this gap, our study examines the impacts of RL on academics' JI in Bangladeshi HEIs. Despite the notable differences between public and private universities in developing countries, little is known about how these distinct yet similar institutions influence the impact of research leadership (RL) on academics' job involvement (JI). By categorizing HEIs into public and private sectors, our study aims to fill this gap and offer valuable insights into the unique role of RL in influencing academics' JI. Generally, studies on university reputation have focused on students' perspectives to gauge their satisfaction and academic achievement (Lafuente-Ruiz-de-Sabando et al., 2018). This research aims to bridge the gap in the existing literature by examining faculty members' perceptions of university reputation, which might differ between private and public institutions. Finally, leveraging signaling theory, our study explores how RL within these contrasting university contexts may employ signaling mechanisms to enhance IR and alleviate JI.

(Figure 1)

Literature review and Hypotheses Development

Responsible leadership (RL)

Unlike transformational leadership, RL adopts a stakeholder perspective and emphasizes creating long-term value through positive social change by cultivating inclusive and ethical stakeholder relationships (Maak & Pless, 2006). Additionally, RL acknowledges the significance of individuals, organizations, and society as beneficiaries of leadership actions beyond traditional economic outcomes (Cortés et al.,2022). In contrast to transformational and transactional leadership theories, which focus primarily on leader-follower relationships and enhancing follower performance, RL underscores the ethical and moral implications of leaders' actions and decisions on stakeholders, particularly employees (Haque et al., 2021; Maak & Pless, 2006). Furthermore, RL recognizes employees as key stakeholders and promotes a relational leadership style both within and outside the organization (Oplatka, 2017). This diverges from transformational leadership, which emphasizes leadership characteristics such as charisma and inspiration and centers on transforming followers (Haque et al., 2021).

As mentioned earlier, HEIs in developing countries confront resource constraints and weak institutional reputations, necessitating RL practices to enhance credibility, legitimacy, and effective management (cf. Laufer et al., 2021). In HEIs of developing countries, RL practices are especially crucial to address contextual challenges. Responsible leaders provide clear signals to stakeholders by ethically engaging with them and cultivating adaptive environments (Marshall et al., 2020). With this backdrop, we present hypotheses development concerning RL's relationship with JI and IR.

Responsible Leadership (RL) on Job insecurity (JI)

While various definitions of JI exist, they all share the common thread that JI is based on employees' perceptions of their immediate work environment (Loi et al., 2012). JI is a global phenomenon prevalent in numerous sectors, including HEIs, due to their competitive and rapidly changing environment (Hardman et al., 2022). Academics often face significant pressure to ensure their job security while meeting new teaching and research performance criteria for promotions and hiring, resulting in increased work demands (Castellacci & Viñas-Bardolet, 2021). The Covid-19 pandemic further exacerbated these challenges, as many universities faced financial constraints, preventing them from offering tenure contracts to academics and intensifying JI (Hardman et al., 2022).

4

Ensuring job security for faculty members is integral to the HEI's mission of educating society and advancing knowledge. Additionally, it fosters a supportive culture that promotes academic development and enhances overall well-being (Cortés et al., 2022). Drawing from signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), the actions of responsible leaders in this context may signal to academics that their university is committed to responsibly interacting with them to ensure job security. Signals are actions that organizations employ to convey their intentions and influence stakeholders, bridging the information gap between senders (responsible leaders) and receivers (employees), particularly in competitive contexts with limited resources (Aras et al., 2022). When academics perceive that their leaders, such as department chairs, are receptive to their opinions and serve as responsible role models, they are more likely to consider themselves integral to their institution and develop emotional attachments to it (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020). In contrast, if university management does not actively engage academics in decision-making regarding strategic initiatives such as sustainability and organizational support for employee development, it can decrease faculty members' loyalty and retention (Cachón-Rodríguez et al., 2022). Academic leaders play a crucial role in shaping the HEI culture that promotes academics' well-being and enhances their performance (Mudrak et al., 2022). Thus, it is plausible that RL can reduce academics' sense of JI.

In the context of managerialism and the marketization of HE (Bloom & Rosovsky, 2007), private university academics often hold temporary and contractual employment positions (Chowdhury et al., 2021). On the other hand, their counterparts in public universities in Bangladesh benefit from government protection and typically enjoy lifetime employment. Consequently, public and private university academics may have differing perceptions of job security (Goldan et al., 2023). The increased workload demands experienced by academics in private universities may influence their perceptions of fair treatment by their respective institutions (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020). Additionally, implementing performance-based management practices has been found to exacerbate work-related stress and diminish academics' job satisfaction (Shin & Jung, 2014). Public universities, in contrast, may lack effective academic leadership due to appointments based on seniority and loyalty to political agendas rather than competence and qualifications (Mudrak et al., 2022). Research indicates that academic leadership that encourages shared governance, academic freedom, and a supportive environment can reduce academics' job stress (Shin & Jung, 2014). Based on the arguments above, this study posits:

H1: Responsible leadership negatively affects academics' job insecurity between public and private universities.

Institutional reputation (IR) and Job insecurity (JI)

Scholars define institutional reputation as stakeholders' perceptions and evaluations of an HEI (Plewa et al., 2016). These perceptions are shaped by subjective norms influenced by stakeholders' attitudes, beliefs, direct experiences with the institution, and various forms of communication and symbolism that convey information about the HEI's actions and values (Miotto et al., 2020). These forms of communication encompass media coverage, advertising, word-of-mouth, and other communication types. IR serves as a differentiation factor that impacts stakeholders' affective responses and behaviors toward the institution (Plewa et al., 2016). According to signaling theory (Connelly et al., 2011), IR signals quality, performance, and positive or negative intentions to stakeholders. Signals can shape stakeholders' perceptions, behaviors, and decisions by offering valuable information, enhancing legitimacy, and reducing uncertainty (Aras et al., 2022).

Reputation is a hallmark of a university's competitive position in the market, serving as a pivotal factor in attracting and retaining top talent (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019; Miotto et al., 2020). Prior studies highlighted that being associated with a reputable organization is a visible signal of individuals' values and competencies, enhancing their professional image and increasing job engagement and satisfaction (Helm, 2011). Aspiring academics are attracted to reputed institutions due to their public prominence and recognition, which significantly diminishes uncertainties regarding employment conditions (Del-Castillo-Feito et al., 2019). Affiliation with a prestigious university bolsters academics' prestige and credibility and fosters a deep sense of attachment to the institution. This attachment emerges from the potential impact on their social identity and confidence in their abilities, ultimately reducing their JI (Plewa et al., 2016).

Signaling theory suggests that universities strategically signal positive information about their reputation to stakeholders (Connelly et al., 2011). In HE, public and private universities communicate their positioning to students and academics through governance and leadership (Aras et al., 2022) with different approaches. For public universities, their government responsibility and funding demonstrate their commitment to enhancing the quality of education, thereby building their IR (Enders & Jongbloed, 2007), which may reduce JI. In contrast, private universities, operating within a market-based environment, may build their IR through performance, competitiveness, and pricing strategies (Enders & Jongbloed, 2007). These differences in institutional contexts and coordination mechanisms can influence academics' perspectives on the role of IR in signaling their job security or insecurity. Based on the theoretical and empirical reasoning above, this study hypothesizes:

H2: Institutional reputation negatively affects academics' job insecurity between public and private universities.

Institutional reputation (IR) as a mediator between Responsible leadership (RL) and Job insecurity (JI)

RL may indirectly impact academics' outcomes through a psychological pathway (Doh & Quigley, 2014). RL acknowledges and prioritizes the needs of internal and external stakeholders, signaling strong and positive relationships with university stakeholders (Maak & Pless, 2006). University leaders can shape their institutions' culture through actions and values (Mudrak et al., 2022). IR derives from its leadership's strength and its ability to address stakeholders' needs (Lafuente-Ruiz-de-Sabando et al., 2018). RL's stakeholder-oriented approach fosters psychological trust and respect, positively influencing employees to attain favorable outcomes (Doh & Quigley, 2014).

When academics perceive that their responsible leaders, such as department heads or deans, engage ethically and are committed to faculty development, they are more likely to view the university positively, fostering a sense of job security (Laufer et al., 2021; Mousa, 2020). Furthermore, according to signaling theory, the effectiveness of responsible actions hinges on the receiver's interpretation (Connelly et al., 2011). In this scenario, responsible leaders' actions may signal an enhancement in IR. Responsible leaders contribute to enhancing academic reputation, fostering innovation, and ensuring excellent teaching experiences (Islam & Haque, 2022). Such initiatives signal that universities aim to establish a robust employer reputation and cultivate a climate of psychological safety conducive to coping with job threats (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020). In our study, RL practices convey the institution's commitment to responsible behavior and ethical conduct, ultimately creating a positive perception of the institution's reputation among academics, which can reduce their JI.

A strong reputation sends positive signals about employee commitment to the organization, allowing employees to align their values and self-identity with their employer (Plewa et al., 2016). It may also contribute to forming a strong ethical bond between academics and the institution and enhance their sense of belonging (Miotto et al., 2020). Academics working in reputable universities feel confident in their ability to perform well. They may receive emotional support from their leaders, aiding their ability to cope with challenges and mitigating JI (Shin & Jung, 2014).

In Bangladesh, the types of reputation of universities may vary among stakeholders between public and private institutions. This disparity might be attributed to differences in governance, funding, and

7

leadership structures between the two types of institutions, as described in Table 1 (Chowdhury et al., 2021). Public universities, being more exposed to public scrutiny, may find IR to be of paramount importance. This is because their ability to meet the expectations of various stakeholders, including academics, depends on their accountability in utilizing government funding and support, as well as in appointing reputable employers (e.g., Vice-Chancellors and Deans) and establishing exemplary educational institutions for the country (BANBEIS, 2020). Furthermore, due to their greater resources, public universities are expected by stakeholders to offer a wider range of degree programs and to outperform private universities in terms of teaching facilities (Chowdhury et al., 2021). In contrast, private universities may be expected to excel in internationalization standards, such as by partnering with Western universities, due to the perceived freedom to respond more quickly to international and market trends, thereby providing a more cutting-edge education not inhibited by political agendas (Roshid et al., 2022; Wilkinson & Yussof, 2005). In either case, we predict that IR mediates the relationship between RL and academics' JI in both types of institutions. Based on the above arguments, this study hypothesizes that:

H3: Institutional reputation mediates the effect of responsible leadership on academics' job insecurity between public and private universities.

Research context

Bangladesh is a densely populated country with a population of 160 million, and nearly half of this population is under 30. The quality of HE is crucial for the country's transition to a knowledge-based economy and the development of its human capital (UGC, 2018). Bangladesh has 46 public and 105 private universities, accommodating 820,430 and 349,160 students respectively (BANBEIS, 2020). Private institutions are governed by the Private Universities Act of 2010, while public universities adhere to the Public Universities Act of 1973. The University Grants Commission (UGC), an independent government commission, regulates all universities, striving to ensure faculty development and high-quality education at the university level (UGC, 2018). Despite the significant number of universities in Bangladesh, their contribution to global knowledge, scholarship, and innovation remains limited (WIPO, 2022). The Covid-19 pandemic (at the time of data collection) required Bangladeshi universities to embrace online learning, aligning with UGC directives. Leaders in HEIs navigate issues of equity, access, teacher training, and technology integration (Roshid et al., 2022). RL within Bangladeshi HEIs becomes indispensable in the face of resource-constrained environments. RL may address academics' negative feelings regarding their

jobs and equip them with adequate resources to promote technology-enhanced learning and digital transformation in higher education, contributing to educational quality (Laufer et al., 2021).

Sample and procedure

Between November 2020 and March 2021, data were collected through an online survey from academics affiliated with public and private universities in Bangladesh. The survey questionnaire was initially developed in English, with a Bengali translation appended using the back-translation technique to enhance readability. To ensure reliable measurement scales, the survey was piloted with 40 responses, leading to modifications in several questions, both in English and Bengali. Qualtrics generated an online survey link. Survey participation was entirely voluntary. Participants were guaranteed anonymity, with the assurance that individual responses would not be analysed; only aggregate data would be used for research purposes. An information page was provided detailing the research purpose, survey participation, and contact details of the researchers. Participants were explicitly informed that their decision to participate or not would remain unknown to the researchers and would have no impact on any existing relationships with the researchers or their respective universities. The comprehensive information was intended to facilitate informed and voluntary participation in the survey.

The study employed purposive sampling to capture a representative sample of academics from public and private universities in Bangladesh. A comprehensive list of universities was chosen due to their diverse disciplines including arts, humanities, social sciences, business, and sciences. Technical institutions, such as engineering, medical, and technology universities, were excluded as they focus exclusively on specialized degree programs (Chowdhury et al., 2021). To initiate the sampling process, a list of public and private universities was generated from the UGC directory. Subsequently, a database containing contact details of faculty members was compiled by navigating university websites. The selection prioritized universities across the seven divisional areas of Bangladesh, emphasizing those with higher faculty members, students, departments, and affiliated centers. The inclusion criteria targeted full-time academics from public and private universities, while part-time faculty members were excluded. The screening question ensured that only full-time faculty members participated in the survey.

According to the UGC report, Bangladeshi public universities employed 15,236 faculty members, while private universities had 15,390 faculty members (BANBEIS, 2020). In the first phase (November 2020 - January 2021), 5,031 academics were contacted via email to participate in the online survey, representing 21 private and 16 public universities. In the second phase (February 2021), a reminder message

9

was sent, resulting in 630 responses, of which 32% were incomplete. Among the usable survey responses, 248 were from public universities, and 178 were from private universities, yielding a response rate of 8.46%, consistent with response rates observed in prior studies (Haque & Khan, 2023).

Male respondents comprised a higher proportion in public universities, accounting for 63.3%, compared to 56.7% in private institutions. Additionally, the rank of senior lecturer was more prevalent in private universities relative to public universities. Demographic variables such as age, tenure, educational qualifications, and teaching status were evenly distributed across both types of universities. The majority of academics in both public and private universities fell within the age range of 26 to 35 years, possessing 4 to 7 years of work experience. Moreover, a significant proportion of respondents from both institutions, 65.3% in public and 66.3% in private universities held master's degrees. Concerning teaching status, over 80% of academics from private and public universities continued to teach remotely, while approximately 12% taught online and in person.

We performed Harman's single-factor test to evaluate the potential presence of response bias. Our findings indicate that 37% of the total variance can be attributed to a single factor, which is well below the threshold of 50% suggested by Podsakoff et al., (2012). To further address the common method bias (CMB) issue, we employed an unmeasured latent method construct. Our results indicate that CMB did not significantly affect the proposed research model, as the percentage of variance in items explained by the method construct (35%) was lower than that explained by substantive constructs (64%).

Measures

All scale measures were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, where participants rated their responses from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The scale items are provided in the appendix.

Responsible leadership

This study utilized the 13-item scale developed by Doh et al. (2012) to measure RL. Islam and Haque (2022) demonstrated that the scale had a synergistic impact encompassing three dimensions of RL, including stakeholder culture, human resource practices, and managerial support.

Job insecurity

We employed an adapted 4-item scale developed by De Witte (2000) to measure JI.

Institutional reputation

IR was measured by an adapted 4-item scale developed by Behrend et al. (2009).

Data analysis procedure

Partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) is a statistical technique involving two distinct steps: (a) the measurement model, which assesses the relationship between each variable and its items, and (b) the structural model, which examines the hypothesized relationships between constructs (Hair et al., 2019). In this study, the dataset was divided into two separate groups (public and private) based on the type of university. PLS-SEM was employed to evaluate the proposed research model (as illustrated in Figure 1). The choice of PLS-SEM is driven by three reasons. Firstly, in contrast to techniques such as Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modeling (CB-SEM), PLS-SEM is specifically designed for exploratory studies, focusing on predicting dependent variables through path models. Secondly, PLS-SEM allows group-specific analyses, directly comparing results and identifying potential disparities in the relationships between latent constructs and indicators in the two settings, consistent with the study's objectives. Third, PLS-SEM has been widely used in pertinent higher education research contexts, particularly in predicting Spanish university reputation and talent retention, as evidenced by studies such as Cachón-Rodríguez et al. (2022) and Miotto et al. (2020).

Results

Measurement model

This stage involved assessing the reliability and validity of the constructs. Indicator loadings for public and private universities are presented separately in Table 1. Hair et al. (2019) state that factor loadings exceeding 0.4 can be considered acceptable, provided the thresholds for convergent validity and internal consistency reliability are met. Moreover, the internal consistency reliability of the measures was deemed satisfactory, as the values of Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.70. Except for the RL construct in private universities, the average variance extracted (AVE) values were higher than the suggested threshold of 0.5, indicating an acceptable level of convergent validity. Even when the AVE is below 0.5, the construct's convergent validity can be considered adequate if the CR is greater than 0.6 (Hair et al., 2019). Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell and Larker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) (Hair et al., 2019). Tables 2 and 3 show that all HTMT values were below the threshold of 0.85 and squared correlations are below AVE values of variables, indicating distinctiveness between each construct in the measurement model. Overall, the results in Tables 1, 2a, 2b, 3a and 3b demonstrate an acceptable measurement model for this study.

(Table 1)

11

(Table 2a & 2b)

(Table 3a & 3b)

Structural model

The bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 re-samples was utilized to assess the significance of the hypothesized relationships (Hair et al., 2019). The results of hypothesis testing are shown in table 4. In public university sample, RL was (H1, $\beta = 0.296$, $p < 0.01$) positively associated with JI, whereas in private university sample, RL (H1, $\beta = -0.195$, $p < 0.05$) was negatively associated with JI. Consequently, H1 was supported for private universities but not for public universities. In public universities, reputation was negatively associated with JI (H2, $\beta = -0.179$, $p < 0.01$), whereas in private universities, the relationship between IR and JI remained insignificant (H1, $\beta = -0.094$, $p > 0.05$). Therefore, H2 was confirmed for the public university sample but not the private university.

(Table 4)

RL portrayed significant positive relationship with IR in public ($\beta = 0.507$, $p < 0.01$) and private ($\beta = 0.692$, $p < 0.01$). The indirect effect was analysed using the product coefficient approach . The confidence intervals demonstrated the significance of the mediating effect. A nonzero between the upper and lower limits of confidence intervals would indicate the significance of mediating effect. The findings revealed that in public universities (H3, $\beta = -0.091$ (0.507 x -0.179), $p < 0.01$), the indirect effects of RL on JI through IR were significant, whereas in private universities (H3, $\beta = -0.065$ (0.692 x -0.094), $p > 0.05$), the indirect effect was insignificant. These results confirm H3 for public universities but not for private universities.

Discussion

This study provides critical insights into the roles of responsible leadership and IR in safeguarding academics' job security, highlighting the need for public-private differences in HEIs contexts of developing countries. First, the study's findings demonstrate that RL negatively affects JI among academics in private universities while it positively relates to JI in public universities. The present findings corroborate with Zulfqar et al. (2016), highlighting differences in institutional practices between public and private universities. Leadership styles emphasizing hierarchical authority, personal connections, and seniority can adversely influence employees' job satisfaction, whereas leadership styles prioritizing followers' interests tend to foster positive job satisfaction (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016). The current study suggests that

RL, characterized by ethical and socially responsible behaviors, might be more pronounced in private universities, leading to lower levels of JI among academics. This could be due to private universities prioritizing open communication with stakeholders less constrained by bureaucratic and political environment to respond to external shocks like Covid-19 and market preferences swiftly (Zulfqar et al., 2016). Effective crisis communication by private organizations, including clear and accurate information, may reduce perceived uncertainty among employees during crises (Marshall et al., 2020). These points align with the uncertainty reduction theory, which posits that individuals feel more at ease during crises when they can access clear information and guidance from responsible leaders. In private universities, the accuracy and openness of information sharing and efficient communication between academic leaders and employees may reduce JI among academics.

Conversely, public universities' bureaucratic and centralized nature, coupled with rigid rules and formal communication, may limit the roles of responsible leaders (Zulfqar et al., 2016). This could result in feelings of alienation among academics, potentially exacerbating JI (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020). Additionally, controversial aspects of operation within public universities, such as political agendas, might lead to academics mistrusting their responsible leaders, further increasing JI (Mudrak et al., 2022). The slower response to promote online learning during the Covid-19 pandemic could also contribute to higher JI among academics in public universities. Public universities in Bangladesh are situated in divisional regions, with students from less affluent and semi-urban areas, resulting in limited access to online learning (Chowdhury et al., 2021). This limited access to online learning along with highly vulnerable economic condition of Bangladesh has put educators' roles at risk, resulting in elevated levels of JI.

The findings also reveal that IR significantly reduces JI among academics in public universities, whereas the impact of IR remains insignificant in private universities. The present findings underscore the importance of institutional-level manifestation of RL in safeguarding academics' job security within public universities compared to private institutions. In other words, when leaders in public universities adopt RL practices, its positive influence on the institution's reputation is necessary to reduce JI among academics. The perception that a public university's response to various stakeholder needs and demands, evaluated institutionally rather than individually, as a better employer, may carry more weight than that of a private institution for reducing academics' JI. In Bangladeshi public universities, RL actions are likely to garner greater attention and visibility due to the institutions' status as public entities (Chowdhury et al., 2021). Positive actions and ethical practices by leaders in such settings are more readily acknowledged and

recognized, contributing to the institution's reputation as a socially responsible and reputable organization (Enders & Jongbloed, 2007; Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020). Furthermore, the prevalence of permanent contracts in public universities may have also enhanced IR, especially during the pandemic, fostering a heightened sense of job security compared to their counterparts in the private sector (Castellacci & Viñas-Bardolet, 2021). Membership in public universities/institutions may also be perceived as prestigious by academics, fostering their positive social identity, potentially contributing to enhanced job security via IR (Helm, 2011). Conversely, academics in private universities might view their positions as more temporary, potentially making them more inclined to seek opportunities in prestigious public universities offering greater job security (Goldan et al., 2023). In private universities, therefore, RL that emanates directly from leaders being perceived as representing universities by their responsiveness to academics and other stakeholders may result in a direct reduction of academics' JI. Due to the resource constraints by private universities in developing countries, these institutions might prioritize concentrating on academics' job security rather than improving their IR, which could be more time-consuming and resource-intensive (Zulfqar et al., 2016). Overall, the study's findings underscore the significance of RL in public universities in fostering and strengthening IR to mitigate academics' JI.

Theoretical implications

This study contributes to the existing literature on the role of RL in HE and its impact on academics' JI. While the public-private distinction has been extensively studied in other business sectors, its implications for HE remain relatively unexplored (Mohammadi & Karupiah, 2020). By investigating a model of university RL on JI and comparing the public and private sectors in Bangladesh, this study advances our understanding of the complex relationship between RL and JI in HE within developing countries. While previous research relating to RL in HE has focused on faculty readiness and psychological contracts in developing countries (Islam & Haque, 2022; Mousa, 2020), this study brings novelty by assessing the impact of RL on JI in both public and private universities. It is found that RL directly reduces JI in private universities while it indirectly mitigates JI in public universities via IR. Furthermore, our study contributes to the IR in HE literature by incorporating perspectives from public and private academics, within the developing country context (Lafuente-Ruiz-de-Sabando et al., 2018). Our study has signified the lens of signaling theory in HE for fostering more positive psychological path for academics in private and public universities in distinctive and constructive ways. HE researchers may adopt this lens more carefully to unpack the relationship between RL and attitudinal outcomes in private university as opposed to public

university. In private university, RL as the individual leaders and in public university, RL as institutional leaders promoting IR matters to influence the degree of JI.

Practical implications

The practical implications of this study are insightful for policymakers and leaders in HE, especially those responsible for managing public and private universities in developing countries. Responsible leaders should consider and address the differing expectations of academics regarding alleviating negative attitudes such as JI (Zulfqar et al., 2016). Adopting RL practices may support university academics emotionally, leading to decreased JI (Oplatka, 2017). Particularly, in private university, the study emphasizes the importance of RL behaviors and practices (e.g., active listening to academics, leading by example, and implementing responsible performance appraisals and compensation practices) for directly reducing academics' JI. These behaviors can boost staff morale by creating a supportive environment and providing clear directions to academics amidst an uncertain environment. In public universities, university leaders need to pay more attention to building IR by communicating and interacting with a wide range of stakeholders, fostering an open institutional culture of faculty consultation (Mudrak et al., 2022), for example, to build the university's reputation as an excellent employer that testifies to the quality of HE in the country, representing a university that people aspire to work for. By implementing these measures to manage the well-being of academics, private and public universities can enhance the development of younger generations in Bangladesh and other developing countries, thereby raising the quality of their knowledge creation and advancement. For private universities, partner institutions from developed countries also have the responsibility to assign responsible leaders to strengthen the partnering HEIs of developing countries in order to achieve the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 4.3, which aims to provide equal global access to affordable and quality education.

Limitations and future research

This study presents several limitations that offer opportunities for future research. Firstly, the measure of JI relies on academics' subjective perceptions rather than objective indicators of job loss. While subjective measures are common in management research, future researchers might benefit from utilizing organization-based archival data to assess actual employment loss among academics. Secondly, understanding why RL in public universities increased academics' JI could be explored further. Factors like role ambiguity and obstacles such as organizational politics could be examined in relation to RL in public

15

universities (Mousa, 2020). Thirdly, this study identified IR as a mediator, but other variables may also play mediating and moderating roles in understanding the mechanisms underlying RL. For instance, trust and knowledge sharing could mediate the pathways of RL (Doh & Quigley, 2014). Our study aligned with the unidimensional approach to measuring IR, consistent with the organizational reputation literature (Behrend et al., 2012; Helm 2011). Consistent with Del-Castillo-Feito et al. (2019), future research should follow a multi-dimensional approach (encompassing university performance, innovation, social responsibility, services, governance, and service climate) to measure university reputation. One of the study's limitations was the low online survey response rate of only 8.46%. This constrained the thorough investigation of the effect of RL on academics across different categories such as discipline, age and ranks. Lastly, qualitative exploration could be valuable in comprehending the effectiveness of RL and identifying obstacles to its adoption within universities. Thus, future research could explore the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, including academics, policymakers, and university leaders.

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Aspect	Private Universities	Public Universities
Establishment History	Started after the 1990s.	Initiated since the 1920s.
Governance Structure	Typically run by private entities (i.e., board of trustees and syndicate).	Governed by the government or public authorities (i.e., a board of syndicate).
Autonomy	Enjoy relatively higher autonomy in decision-making.	Subject to government regulations and bureaucracy.
Funding Sources	Mainly funded through tuition fees.	Primarily funded by government.
Flexibility	Can often adapt more quickly to market demands.	May face bureaucratic hurdles and slower changes.
Financial Sustainability	May face financial challenges due to reliance on fees.	Have more stable funding but may lack resources.
Academic Programs	Not permitted to offer MPhil and PhD degree programs.	Permitted to offer MPhil and PhD degree programs.
Salary and Benefits	Can set their pay scale for academic and non-academic staff.	Government's pay scales set the salaries and benefits of academics and other staff.
Leadership Composition	Key positions often held by senior faculty members of public universities after retirement.	Government controls the appointment of leadership positions, including Vice Chancellor, and Pro-Vice Chancellor.
Campus Facilities	Often lack permanent campuses, extensive libraries, and other facilities.	Have permanent campuses, playgrounds, libraries, and cultural centers for broader educational perspectives.
Political Activities	Involvement in political activities and parties is rare.	Common involvement in political activities, with a few exceptions.
Graduation Timeframe	Graduating on time is a key priority.	Graduating on time is challenging due to political instability and bureaucratic complexities.

Table I. Source: Chowdhury et al. (2021)

Appendix

Responsible leadership

RL1   Our university takes an active role in its community;

RL2   Our university takes ethics seriously (e.g. is committed to ethics training);

RL3   Our university responds well to a diverse group of stakeholders (e.g. teacher, employee, students, government or its agencies, and the community);

RL4   Our university takes corporate social responsibility seriously (e.g. has a clear policy that reflects its commitment to one or more social causes);

RL5   Our performance appraisal programs are effectively used to retain the best talent;

RL6   Our compensation programs are effectively used to retain the best talent;

RL7   Our university believes that all faculty members deserve to be actively managed as talent;

RL8   Our university's program (e.g. training or workshops) for high potentials helps in talent retention;

RL9   Our university has a formal "high potential" program (e.g. training and development for team building or enhancing leadership skills etc.) – teachers know what they need to do to get into it and to advance within it;

RL10   Our current head of department/faculty/school leads by example;

RL11   Our current head of department/faculty/school gives me the support I need to do my job well;

RL12   Our current head of department/faculty/school is effective. (e.g. makes right decisions) and

RL13   Our current head of the department/faculty/school is good at developing faculty members

Job insecurity

JI1   It makes me anxious that I might be unemployed in near future;

JI2   I am concerned of the continuity of my current job;

JI3   I fear about losing my current job and

JI4   I am feeling insecure about my future employment.

Institutional reputation

IR1   This is a reputable university to work for;

IR2   This university has a reputation as being an excellent employer;

IR3   This university is a prestigious place to work and

IR4   Many people would like to work at this university.