

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**EXAMINING THE ROLE OF
POLITICAL SKILL, WORK-LIFE
BALANCE, AND ORGANIZATIONAL
CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOUR ON
PERSONAL REPUTATION AMONG
PROFESSIONAL CENTENNIALS IN
THE MALAYSIAN SERVICE
INDUSTRY: THE MEDIATING ROLE
OF TRUST**

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ABSTRACT

Given the increasing number of emerging graduates, navigating today's highly competitive job market has become exceedingly challenging. The substantial volume of applicants competing for a limited number of vacancies necessitates that current professionals distinguish themselves through unique attributes to maintain relevance and appeal to employers. Previous research has demonstrated that a strong personal reputation confers a competitive advantage to individuals. This is particularly pertinent for professionals in the service industry, where personal reputation plays a critical role in establishing and sustaining successful client relationships and achieving long-term professional success. Ultimately, employing professionals with distinguished reputations can substantially benefit a company within the service sector by enhancing its brand image, boosting client satisfaction, and improving overall business performance. Accordingly, this study seeks to identify the antecedents influencing the development of personal reputation among professionals within the Malaysian service industry. Specifically, it examines the impact of political skill, work-life balance (WLB), and organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB) on personal reputation, and further explores the mediating role of trust in the relationships between the predictor variables (political skill, WLB and OCB) on personal reputation. Signaling theory provides a foundational framework for elucidating how political skills, WLB, and OCB function as high-quality signals conveyed by the sender, which in turn contributes to the development of a favorable reputation as perceived by the receiver. This study employs a quantitative research methodology and utilizes a cross-sectional data collection technique. Data were collected from 201 professional Centennials, born between 1995 and 2012, employed in the Malaysian service industry, using a self-administered questionnaire survey. SPSS and PLS-SEM are used to analyze demographic characteristics and variable relationships. The findings indicated that political skill, WLB, and OCB had a positive impact on personal reputation. Notably, the study found that trust did not mediate the relationships between political skill, WLB, and OCB on personal reputation. This insight offers a novel contribution, suggesting that professional Centennials construct their reputational capital less through interpersonal trust and more through self-directed credibility, visible performance, and strategic networking. These findings reflect a generational shift in the mechanisms underlying personal reputation in organizational contexts, with important implications for leadership development and reputation management practices. Additionally, Importance-Performance Map Analysis reveals that political skill is crucial for shaping personal reputation, as it improves task performance and responsibility fulfilment, leading to a highly esteemed reputation within the organization. The findings also emphasize the need for further research to explore cross-cultural replication, longitudinal designs, alternative mediating variables, and multidimensional constructs. Furthermore, research on online reputation is recommended, considering the Centennial generation's high level of digital engagement.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preface

This chapter begins with a presentation of the study background to elucidate the research further. This is followed by the problem statement to explain the need for the research. The research objectives and questions follow suit to describe how the research variables were developed. Next is the presentation of the scope of the study and research significance. Finally, the chapter ends with the delineation of terminologies used in this study.

1.2 Background of Study

1.2.1 An Insight of Personal Reputation

One of the most important tools for exerting influence over others is one's reputation. Warren Buffet once famously said, “It takes twenty years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it” (Wilding, 2016). This statement implies that it takes a significant amount of time, work, and consistency often decades to develop a solid, positive reputation. However, if someone makes a major error or behaves recklessly, it can be destroyed quickly, sometimes in a matter of minutes. The idea behind this concept is that respect and trust are earned over time, but they can be lost quickly. It emphasizes how crucial it is to act responsibly and cautiously because tarnishing one's reputation can have severe consequences that happen swiftly.

Whilst Socrates stated, “The way to gain a good reputation is to endeavour to be what you desire to appear” (Karaduman, 2013). In this statement, the author suggested that to earn an excellent reputation, individuals should strive to genuinely embody the qualities and values they wish to be known for. Also, instead of simply striving to look or act in a particular manner, concentrate on truly developing and expressing such characteristics. People will judge you to have a good reputation if your activities and character truly represent the characteristics you want to be known for. In essence, genuineness and constant effort are critical to developing a great reputation.