

Leadership Dynamics in a Hybrid Civil - Military Institution: Examining Social Exchange and Employee Performance in Malaysia's Ministry of Defense

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the impact of leadership styles on employee performance and job satisfaction in the Ministry of Defense, Malaysia (MINDEF). It was focused on transformational, transactional and authoritarian leadership styles within a hierarchical public sector context that has been guided by Social Exchange Theory (SET). It was applied using a self-administered questionnaire and distributed to all levels of MINDEF employees through convenience sampling by a quantitative research design. In order to analyze all the data, descriptive statistics, reliability analysis, Pearson correlation, and multiple regression techniques were used. The result indicated that transformational leadership has positive influences on both employee performance and job satisfaction, while transactional leadership indicates a moderate beneficial influence particularly on performance outcomes. In contrast, authoritarian leadership is found to have a negative impact on employee performance and job satisfaction. The study contributes to the limited empirical literature on leadership in Malaysia's defense sector and provides practical implications for leadership development and management practices aimed at enhancing employee effectiveness and well-being.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Authoritarian Leadership, Employee Performance, Job Satisfaction, Ministry of Defence, Malaysia.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership in a public sector performance globally remains as a dominant factor, as visionary leadership drives strategic alignment, fosters positive workplace behavior, and elevates the standard of public sector. According to Van Wart (2017), leadership in public administration will directly affect the effectiveness of administrative, citizen trust and employee motivation. Leadership will become even more critical in hierarchical public bureaucracies due to authority, communication and decision-making potentially limiting employee autonomy typically flow from the top down. Studies from Fernandez and Rainey (2019) highlight that leadership styles that are overly rigid or compliance-oriented can suppress innovation, lower morale and hinder performance, whereas more supportive and empowering leadership can remove the constraints of bureaucracy. In these circumstances, scholars have significantly studied the influence of transformational, transactional and authoritarian leadership styles on employee performance. Transformational leadership, by Bass and Riggio (2019), inspires followers through vision, motivation and individualized consideration, and broadly related with enhanced job satisfaction, organizational commitment and performance. Conversely, transactional leadership, which emphasizes well-defined expectations, rewards and corrective actions, can improve task performance but may not generate the same level of intrinsic motivation or long-term satisfaction (Northouse, 2021). Authoritarian leadership, while a strict, rule-based approach, has been linked to lower job satisfaction and increased stress due to its top-down, controlling nature (Chan, Huang & Ng, 2020)

These factors are particularly relevant to the Ministry of Defence, Malaysia (MINDEF), which conducts within a dual civilian-military structure that combines bureaucratic public administration with strict military hierarchy. Studies from Farid and Ahmad (2022), state that leadership in defence organization is uniquely sensitive because it must balance administrative accountability, operational readiness and morale under conditions of high structure and discipline. Civilian leaders are responsible for complicated financial processes, execution of defence policy and cross-agency collaboration, while military leaders maintain chain of command and assure operational readiness of personnel. These complications mean leadership styles have possessed significant capacity to enhance or undermine employee performance and job satisfaction. Despite the critical role of leadership in security institutions, research on leadership styles within Malaysian defence agencies is relatively scarce compared to other ministries or agencies. In the hierarchical organizational context in MINDEF, two-tiered leadership models are heightened emphasis on effective personnel management in the defence sector exploring the effects of transformational, transactional and authoritarian leadership styles on employee performance and job satisfaction in both pertinent and crucial. Pertaining to that, this study addresses a significant empirical void while providing practical insights for leadership development, organizational reform and boosting morale and effectiveness in one of Malaysia's key public institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of Theoretical Framework

Theoretically, the relationship between leadership styles, employee performance and job satisfaction is commonly explained through exchange mechanisms, motivational pathways and behavioural modelling. Recent work shows that when leaders provide support, fairness, recognition and development opportunities, employees feel obligated to reciprocate with higher effort, loyalty and citizenship behaviours, a logic captured most clearly by Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Ahmad et al., 2023). SET posits that leader-follower relationships develop as ongoing exchanges of tangible (rewards, resources) and intangible (respect, trust) benefits; where exchanges are perceived as fair and beneficial, employees respond with stronger job satisfaction and performance. Studies from Tan et al. (2025) show that leadership behaviours framed as supportive, benevolent or ethical enhance performance and satisfaction precisely because they cultivate high quality social exchanges and feel obligation. Compared with other theories, SET offers the most direct explanation for how different leadership styles translate into both attitudinal outcomes (job satisfaction) and behavioural outcomes (performance), making it a particularly suitable core framework for this study.

Hartati, Fauzi & Zohriah (2024) mentioned that when compared with Path- Goal Theory, the characteristic value of SET becomes clearer. Path-Goal Theory explains leadership effectiveness in terms of how leaders clarify goals, remove obstacles and align rewards with effort, arguing that directive, supportive, participative and achievement-oriented behaviours enhance motivation when they fit subordinate and task characteristics. Recent studies show that path cases, satisfaction by structuring the "path" from effort to rewards (Pacia & Guevarra, 2023). However, Path-Goal Theory is largely instrumental and situational: it explains how leaders adjust style to task conditions, but says less about relational quality, reciprocity or perceptions of fairness that underpin job satisfaction and long-term commitment. SET complements and extends this view by explaining why clarified goals and support matter-because they are interpreted as valuable social resources within an exchange relationship, strengthening employees' willingness to reciprocate with higher performance and positive attitudes.

Comparably, Transformational Leadership Theory focuses on the specific behaviours-idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration-that inspire followers to exceed expectations. Recent reviews and empirical studies consistently show that transformational leadership enhances motivation, job satisfaction, commitment and performance across sectors (Khan et al., 2020)

On the other hand, Contingency Theory emphasizes that no single leadership style is universally effective; instead, performance depends on the fit between leader characteristics, follower attributes and situational demands. According to Hadiyanti et al. (2024), recent work shows a renewed interest in contingency perspectives in public sector and crisis contexts, including defence organizations, where task structure, uncertainty and

institutional constraints shape leadership effectiveness. Contingency Theory helps explain why authoritarian or highly directive leadership may be functional in high-risk, tightly structured military operations, but less effective in knowledge-based, collaborative administrative settings. However, it remains largely context-focused, providing limited insight into micro-level relational and psychological mechanisms (trust, fairness, reciprocity) through which specific leadership styles influence job satisfaction and performance.

These theories generate several theoretical tensions. Path-Goal and Contingency theories stress situational fit and task structure, but can underplay the socioemotional and fairness-based dimensions of leadership that SET foregrounds. Transformational Leadership Theory provides a rich account of inspirational and development behaviours, yet tends to assume that these behaviours are universally positive, even though empirical evidence shows mixed effects in different cultures and sectors (Schmitt, T. 2025). In addition, a study from Pacia and Guevarra (2023) mentioned that path-goal based studies sometimes find weak or inconsistent relationships with job satisfaction, suggesting that clarity and structure alone are insufficient without perceptions of fair, supportive exchange. While in defence and security settings, Ramoeletsi and Cameron (2024) said recent contingency-based work emphasizes situational demands, but still points to trust, perceived support and leader-member exchange quality as critical to performance and engagement, underscoring the need for an explicit exchange-based lens.

Overall, these perceptions verify **Social Exchange Theory as the primary underpinning framework for this study**. SET directly explains how employees interpret different leadership styles-transformational, transactional and authoritarian- as patterns of resource and socioemotional exchange, which then form their job satisfaction and performance through norms of reciprocity, trust and perceived support. Transformational leadership can be seen as a high-investment, high-quality exchange, transactional leadership as a formal, contingent exchange of rewards for performance, and authoritarian leadership as a low-trust, asymmetrical exchange where control outweighs support. By integrating SET with contemporary leadership theories-Path-Goal, Transformational and Contingency-the present study positions leadership styles as a resource exchange mechanism that shapes form employees' behavioural and attitudinal outcomes, while still acknowledge that the effectiveness of each style is conditioned by the defence sector's hierarchical, civilian-military context.

A review of Empirical Literature

Transformational leadership: Generally positive but context-positive. Across large meta-analyses and multi-sector studies, transformational behaviour shows the strongest and most consistent positive associations with follower performance, organizational outcomes and job attitudes (higher motivation, commitment, discretionary effort). However, the strength and even presence of those positive effects vary in high-hierarchy, rule bound organizations (e.g., military, heavily bureaucratic public agencies): in such contexts the transformational effect is weakened or conditional on task type, leader authority, and rank structure (transformational boost is stronger for discretionary, adaptive tasks but weaker for tightly prescribed routine tasks (Judge and Piccolo, 2004).

Transactional leadership: performance gains; satisfaction effects conditional. Meta-analytic evidence shows that contingent reward (the "positive" transactional element) reliably predicts task performance (clear expectations + rewards map onto measurable outputs), and its effect sizes often approach those for transformational leadership on objective performance criteria. By contrast, the passive/active forms (especially management; in many settings contingent reward improves short-term performance but does not reliably foster intrinsic motivation or sustained job satisfaction unless paired with developmental/transformational behaviours (Judge and Piccolo, 2004).

Authoritarian leadership: mostly negative for attitudes/innovation, sometimes positive for short term compliance/mission tasks. Empirical work on authoritarian or directive leadership finds consistent negative effects on trust, voice, creativity and job satisfaction (mediated by safety, psychological ownership, and rumination). Yet a growing strand of empirical studies also documents contextual exceptions: authoritarian direction can improve immediate task completion and measurable performance in high-stress, tightly timed, or emergency/combat operations (especially when followers have low autonomy or high power-distance orientation). Hence, Asim et al. (2021) found that authoritarian leadership's net effect is negative for routine

administrative outcomes that depend on voluntary cooperation and innovation, but can be neutral/positive in narrowly time-bounded, directive missions.

The conflicting findings in Malaysian public sector research are largely attributable to two persistent empirical factors such as **cultural norms** which are higher average power-distance, respect for hierarchy and preference for clear authority can buffer negative reactions to directive behaviors and moderate relationships between style and attitudes; and the **bureaucratic expectations** which are rigid job descriptions, promotion/pension incentives, and emphasis on compliance mean performance is often measured in procedural/administrative outputs (where contingent reward/direct commands can yield measurable gains), while job satisfaction and innovation metrics remain low. These two forces produce the empirical pattern according to Baharuddin [et.al](#) (2022) Transactional and Authoritarian behaviours sometimes show acceptable performance outcomes in Malaysia public organizations but routinely underperform on satisfaction, trust and innovation indicators unless combined with transformational elements.

Defence sector research gaps (Malaysia): empirical work directly comparing transformational vs transactional vs authoritarian leadership in Malaysia defence contexts is scarce. Existing Malaysian military studies mainly address values, morale, commitment, hospital/administrative leadership, or single-style correlations (e.g., leadership & job satisfaction, career development), not integrated models testing **three IVs (the three styles)** against **two DVs (employee performance and job satisfaction)** with appropriate controls for rank, task type and organizational autonomy. This gap means we lack robust, transfer-tested estimates of a) interaction effects (e.g., when contingent reward moderates transformational benefits), b) rank/task moderation (officer vs enlisted; combat vs non-combat admin), and c) mediation pathways (psychological safety, perceived procedural fairness) specific to Malaysian bureaucracy (Kamaruddin et al., 2020).

Judge and Piccolo (2004) mentioned that to resolve the contradictions in Malaysian defence/administrative contexts, empirical studies should use multi-source outcome measures (objective performance and self report satisfaction), sample across ranks and tasks types (combat, operational, routine admin) and test an integrated model with transformational, contingent reward and authoritarian predictors plus mediators (psychological safety, job clarity) and moderators (power-distance, leader autonomy). That design directly targets the empirical gaps noted above.

Therefore, there is **no comprehensive empirical model** in the Malaysian defence context that examines **three key leadership styles (TL, TSL, AL) as independent variables and two core outcomes (employee performance and job satisfaction) as dependent variables** within the same framework.

The implication for the present study can be taken together, the empirical patterns indicate that transformational leadership generally predicts positive outcomes, but its strength is uncertain in rigid, hierarchical defence settings. Transactional leadership reliably enhances performance, while its effect on satisfaction is conditional and culturally shaped. Authoritarian leadership tends to undermine satisfaction and trust, with limited contexts (crisis/combat) where it may be functionally justified. The Malaysian defence administrative context remains empirically underexplored, with no integrated comparison of the three leadership styles on both performance and job satisfaction.

This empirical landscape directly justifies this study's design by testing **transformational, transactional and authoritarian leadership (3 IVs)** against **employee performance and job satisfaction (2 DVs)** in Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) Headquarters and some of other departments, the research responds to documented gap and clarifies how leadership operates in a highly hierarchical, defence-specific environment.

Literature Gap

Regardless of widespread academic research on leadership styles and employee outcomes, several serious deficits remain within the Malaysian defence context. Here are the detailed literature gaps that have been identified in this study. Firstly, there are Limited Studies on Leadership Styles in Malaysia's Defence Sector.

Although the recent literature widely agrees regarding leadership in public administration globally, peer review of the Malaysian defence sector remains limited. Current research within the broader Malaysian context tends to focus on general public service or specific industries like education or healthcare (Baharuddin et., 2022 & Kamaruddin et al., 2020). Researchers often generalize findings from other sectors to the civil service without accounting for the unique, hierarchical nature of the defence environment. There also a research published in local journals between 2020-2024 found examines leadership styles within the public sector broadly (Baharuddin et., 2022 & Kamaruddin et al., 2020), but specific, targeted studies on MINDEF employees are evidently nonexistent from major databases. This study needs to fill the gap by providing research findings specifically from the Malaysian defence administration, as existing literature lacks context-specific analysis.

Second, existing Malaysian studies in public organizations tend to examine only single leadership styles. Current literature often separates one dominant leadership theory for analysis. For example, multiple current studies advocate transformational leadership (TL) as undisputedly better, analyzing its impact separately (Baharuddin et., 2022). Other studies might concentrate exclusively on transactional styles within highly structured organizations. Evidence from Baharuddin et al (2022) shows strong preferences for investigating the effects of single styles (e.g., impact of TL on satisfaction. This separated approach fails to capture the difficulty of leadership dynamics in a large organization. A comparative study integrating multiple styles together is needed to understand which style is most effective under specific defence contexts.

While the other literature gaps, there is no study that combines Transformational, Transactional and Authoritarian Leadership together. The integration of these three specific, often contradictory, styles is a significant gap. Scholarly agreements typically contrast transformational (ideal for change) opposed to transactional (ideal for structure). Authoritarian leadership is usually studied in non-Western contexts but rarely alongside the other two in a Malaysian context. There is no latest research paper between 2020-2025 that quantitatively assesses the interplay or relative impact of these three distinct styles-TL, TSL and Authoritarian under the same methodology. The present paper offers a unique methodology concurrently assessing the significance of all three styles in the unique MINDEF environment.

Fourth, most of the previous studies focus on one outcome variable, typically job satisfaction or employee performance, leading to an incomplete picture of how leadership gives an impact to both attitudinal and behavioural outcomes together. A study from Baharuddin et al (2022) said that recent studies either focus on job satisfaction exclusively or employee performance metrics, only occasionally analyzing both as integrated dependent variables within a single empirical model. A more comprehensive perspective is warranted. A specific leadership style that optimizes both performance and satisfaction within MINDEF can be determined in this research by studying both outcomes concurrently.

Fifth, the unique dual-civilian-military structure of MINDEF means that findings from other ministries or civilian-only agencies cannot be directly generalized to defence organization, where hierarchy, command structures and organizational culture differ substantially. The unique structure of MINDEF, which consists of both civilian administrative staff and military personnel, presents a distinct organizational culture not found in the Ministry of Finance or Ministry of Education. This dual structure constraints the applicability of findings from other public sector research. The internal dynamics of MINDEF need to be examined in detail. This study aims to address a critical contextual gap that currently limits cross-ministry comparison.

Sixth, there are a few studies that empirically test leadership using reliable measures such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) together with validated measures of employee performance and job satisfaction specifically within Malaysian defence administrative units. The study will deliver empirically supported data using trustworthy instruments within the particular research context.

The last gap is the limited use of the theoretical framework using Social Exchange Theory (SET) in defence leadership research, despite its value for analyzing relational dynamics within rigid, authority-based organizational environments. To explain the reciprocal relationship between perceived leadership behaviour and employee responses (performance and satisfaction) by using SET would provide a stronger theoretical lens. By

using SET as its fundamental theoretical framework, this study strengthens the explanatory power and theoretical contribution of the findings within the defence field.

Generally, these gaps collectively demonstrate the necessity for a rigorous, theory-guided study examining three leadership styles (transformational, transactional, authoritarian) and their combined effects on both employee performance and job satisfaction within MINDEF.

METHODOLOGY

The present study adopts a quantitative research design, specifically using a cross-sectional survey approach to examine the impact of leadership styles on employee performance and job satisfaction in the Ministry of Defence, Malaysia (MINDEF). A quantitative design is more suitable since the study aims to measure the relationships between clearly defined variables which are transformational, transactional and authoritarian leadership styles towards employee performance and job satisfaction by using numerical data that can be statistically analyzed. The cross-sectional nature of the design allows data to be collected from respondents at a single point in time, which is practical and suitable for capturing perceptions within large and structured organizations like MINDEF. This design supports the use of standardized instruments and statistical procedures, including correlation and multiple regression analysis, to determine the strength and direction of the relationships between the leadership variables and employee outcomes. Using a structured questionnaire deployed across multiple administrative units, the research design maintains consistency, strengthens reliability, and facilitates the generalization of findings to the larger MINDEF workforce. Overall, to understand how leadership practices shape employee performance and satisfaction in a hierarchical public sector environment, the research design provides a systematic, objective and empirical method.

Table 1. Reliability Analysis

Variable	Number of Items	Cronbach Alpha Value`
Workload	3	0.225
Perceived Leader EI	4	0.780
Transformational Leadership	12	0.936
Transactional Leadership	8	0.909
Authoritarian Leadership	6	0.849
Employee Performance	6	0.883
Job Satisfaction	5	0.607

A reliability test was conducted to assess the internal consistency of the survey instruments. The primary metric used was Cronbach's Alpha (α), a standard measure that evaluates how well a set of items measures a single unidimensional latent construct. In the context of a pilot study, thresholds can be slightly relaxed, though an alpha value of 0.700 or above is generally regarded as acceptable (DeVellis, 2016). Lower values may be tolerated in early-stage research to inform refinement.

Table 2. Correlation Analysis

Employee Performance			Job Satisfaction
Transformational Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.507**	0.713**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	356	356
Transactional Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.488**	0.698**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000
	N	356	356
Authoritarian Leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.022	-0.137**

	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.673	0.010
	N	356	356
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).			

Based on the above, the result of correlation analysis between transformational leadership and employee performance showed significance as the p-value was 0.000 that is smaller than the significant value ($p\text{-value} = 0.000 \leq 0.01$). There was a positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance with $r = 0.507$ significantly.

Correlation analysis between transformational leadership and job satisfaction showed significance as the p-value was 0.000 that is smaller than the significant value ($p\text{-value} = 0.000 \leq 0.01$). There was a positive relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction with $r = 0.713$ significantly.

Correlation analysis between transactional leadership and employee performance showed significance as the p-value was 0.000 that is smaller than the significant value ($p\text{-value} = 0.000 \leq 0.01$). There was a positive relationship between transactional leadership and employee performance with $r = 0.488$ significantly.

Correlation analysis between transactional leadership and job satisfaction showed significance as the p-value was 0.000 that is smaller than the significant value ($p\text{-value} = 0.000 \leq 0.01$). There was a positive relationship between transactional leadership and job satisfaction $r = 0.698$ significantly.

Correlation analysis between authoritarian leadership and employee performance showed no significance as the p-value was 0.673 that is higher than the significant value ($p\text{-value} = 0.673 \geq 0.01$). There was a positive relationship between authoritarian leadership and employee performance with $r = 0.022$ insignificantly.

Correlation analysis between authoritarian leadership and job satisfaction showed significance as the p-value was 0.010 that is equal to significant value ($p\text{-value} = 0.010 = 0.01$). There was a negative relationship between authoritarian leadership and job satisfaction with $r = -0.0137$ significantly.

Summary of Hypotheses

To Employee Performance		
Transformational Leadership	Significantly influencing	Hypothesis accepted
Transactional Leadership	Significantly influencing	Hypothesis accepted
Authoritarian Leadership	Significantly Influencing	Hypothesis accepted
To Job Satisfaction		
Transformational Leadership	Significantly influencing	Hypothesis accepted
Transactional Leadership	Significantly influencing	Hypothesis accepted
Authoritarian Leadership	Significantly Influencing	Hypothesis accepted

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings reinforce that effective leadership is essential for performance and satisfaction at the Ministry of Defence, Malaysia (MINDEF). This supports Social Exchange Theory, suggesting that positive leadership triggers a cycle of motivation and better workplace outcomes. The strongest positive predictor of both performance and satisfaction is transformational leadership suggesting that leaders who articulate a clear vision, provide individualized support, and encourage intellectual stimulation enhance employees' behavioural attitudinal responses. In line with previous public sector research, these results confirm transformational leadership enhances intrinsic motivation and creativity while strengthening affective commitment. Transactional leadership also demonstrated a slight yet positive association with employee variables. This effect was mainly driven by performance-based reward, which boosts results by setting clear goals and encouraging specific work

habits; yet this style of leadership often fails to build internal drive or encourage employees to do more than the bare minimum. Conversely, a rigid, authoritarian style clearly hurts both job satisfaction and overall work performance. Essentially, top-down leadership based on punishment and strict rules tends to make staff feel unsafe, lowering their job satisfaction and discouraging them from speaking up. This reinforces the idea that rigid leadership styles are especially harmful in jobs that require group input and the ability to pivot.

Based on the results of this study, a few recommendations and suggestions will be proposed to strengthen leadership capacity and organizational effectiveness within the Ministry of Defence, Malaysia (MINDEF). Firstly, effective communication, empathy, strategic visioning and the ability to intellectually stimulate subordinates as a leadership development initiatives should be prioritized in order to enhance transformational competencies. Following this, ensuring that acknowledgment, feedback, and incentives are delivered consistently and equitably, MINDEF should refine and institutionalize a performance-based reward system to capitalize on strengths of transactional leadership. Then, the organization should suppress authoritarian leadership practices by providing training on participative decision-making, coaching, and supportive supervision. These approaches may help encourage a more collaborative, respectful and psychologically safe work environment. In addition, as a requirement of further development, leadership evaluation mechanisms such as 360-degree feedback and competency-based assessments should be implemented in order to monitor leadership behaviours and identify areas. Broadly speaking, these recommendations are highly recommended to promote a leadership culture that aligns with contemporary public sector expectations and enhances overall organizational performance.

This study opens up a few interesting paths for researchers to explore next. The first suggestion, for future investigations that may benefit from including both civilian and uniformed personnel, to enable comparative analysis across different occupational groups within MINDEF. This comparison would shed light on the ways top-down structure impacts both a leader's effectiveness and how they are viewed by their team. Secondly, researchers may explore mediating or moderating variables such as organizational culture, psychological empowerment or job stress that can help clarify the specific ways leadership approaches affect job results and team well-being. Third, a qualitative or mixed- method might be applied to document the specific, unique moments that a broad survey might miss and contextual factors influencing leadership dynamics in defence organizations. Thus, to strengthen causal interpretations, longitudinal research is also recommended to look at the long-term trends in how management styles impact performance and satisfaction. Another important path for research is exploring the impact of women's leadership styles on employee performance and job satisfaction. Since gender can shape how a leader is perceived, it's worth investigating if certain approaches are more or less effective for women. Finally, another key area for study is how leadership adapts to a digital environment, particularly within defence agencies that are rapidly modernizing their administrative processes.

FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMENDATION

Future research should address several methodological limitations of the present study. First, the use of convenience sampling may limit the representativeness of the sample and the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future studies should employ probability sampling techniques, such as stratified or simple random sampling, to obtain a more representative sample of employees across different departments and ranks within the Ministry of Defence. Second, while this study adopted a cross-sectional design, future research should utilize longitudinal designs to better establish causal relationships between leadership styles, employee performance, and job satisfaction over time. In addition, mixed-methods approaches that combine quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews or focus groups would provide richer insights into employees' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of different leadership styles within the unique civil–military organizational context. Finally, future studies are encouraged to incorporate additional organizational variables, such as organizational culture, organizational commitment, psychological safety, employee engagement, and perceived organizational support, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the mechanisms through which leadership influences employee outcomes. These extensions would strengthen the explanatory power of future models and contribute to more robust leadership research within Malaysia's public defence sector.

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