

Managerial Grid Leadership and Strategic Communication in Malaysia Madani Governance: A Conceptual Analysis

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ABSTRACT

The Malaysia Madani economics and social agenda under the current premiership pursues six significant values: Sustainability, Prosperity, Innovation, Respect, Trust, and Compassion. This governance framework seeks to foster a progressive well-being and inclusive development for all Malaysians, despite differences of language, religion and ethnicity. Towards achieving this political mission, a strategic set of communication strategies including planning and enforcement must be collectively done to ensure all stakeholders' engagement and pledges. The previous discussions have addressed the significant needs of transformational leadership in promoting the agenda of Madani, this paper focuses on analysing the leadership style based on the Managerial Grid Leadership Theory by Blake and Mouton (1964) which focuses on the equal importance between the concern for people and concern for results as the performance indicator of governance efficiency. This study approached a wide-ranging review of secondary literature and suggests that a communication activity become more operative when a leaders express concerns appropriately on both people (employee wellbeing, rapport, trust, and communication) and results (performance, targets and achieving goals). This study suggests a conceptual framework reflecting how the leadership behaviours influence the effectiveness of strategic communication in the Malaysia Madani framework, according grounded in Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Theory

Keywords: Madani, Strategic Communication, Grid Leadership Theory

INTRODUCTION

Ushama (2025) suggests that the Madani terminology has been deeply engrained in Islamic history and its civilization, which upholding fairness, care and compassion, as well as conscientious leadership in administrative activities. The execution of Malaysia Madani demands more than just a new governing rhetorical slogan, but it signals a revolution on how the public administration engages with citizens. In a diverse and multicultural society such as Malaysia, effective governance depends on fairness, inclusivity, transparency, and responsiveness to the needs of all communities. Public institutions are therefore expected to reinforce citizen involvement, increase the quality of policy decision-making, and nurture public trust and support for government initiatives. Towards achieving these objectives, there requires administrative practices that not only deliver effective policies but also communicate their purposes, benefits, and consequences in ways that resonate with varied stakeholder groups. In this context of study, Madani is no longer a slogan; it performs a crucial role that represents a governance philosophy that must be communicated strategically with clear, consistent, and credible voices to ascertain the societal acceptance. Strategic communication holds a high accountability level for enunciating the underlying principles of Malaysia Madani, explaining its policy directions, and demonstrating how its execution contributes to the well-being of the rakyat.

Even though existing literature has recognized the importance of transformational leadership in supporting organisational change and effective communication, limited attention has been given to the influence of leadership styles and leader-member relationships on strategic communication within the context of Malaysia Madani. This gap is particularly evident in understanding how leadership behaviours contribute to the

successful communication of governance initiatives and the cultivation of public confidence. To address this gap, the present study adopts Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Leadership Theory as its theoretical foundation. Specifically, it examines how the dimensions of concern for people and concern for results influence the effectiveness of strategic communication in advancing the objectives of Malaysia Madani governance. By integrating leadership theory with strategic communication, this study seeks to extend the scholarly discourse on governance communication and provide insights into leadership practices that support more inclusive and effective public administration.

This study puts forward the assumptions by Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Leadership Theory in the Malaysia Madani governance setting. In comparison to the previous study which was applicable for corporate governance, this study emphasizes on how leadership patterns determine strong influence of the concerns for people and results, and explicitly affecting strategic communication, public trust and administration outcomes. This study offers multifaceted understanding on the importance of integrated leadership behaviours which cultivates openness and effective governance, hence advancing both theoretical and practical leadership particularly in the Muslim-dominated society, like Malaysia.

Problem Statement

The agenda of Malaysia Madani, be it at the stages of planning, developing and executing have been progressively accepted as the administrative guideline. In doing so, the role of strategic communications becomes prominent as the socio-economic programs or policies are intended not only to enhance both leaders-members relationship, but also to ensure the planning and information are conveyed effectively. Even though previous researches have identified the performance of strategic communicator through transformational leadership, however there is an evident gap showing how strategic communication could influence the leadership behaviours and ultimately determine the leaders-members relationship. A well-defined conceptual framework describing these connection remains unexplored.

Grounding in the Managerial Grid Leadership Theory by Blake and Mouton (1964), this concept paper suggests that an effective strategic communication is influenced by two primary dimensions: (i) concern for people, and (ii) concern for results, which explain how the leadership styles can have an influence on the effectiveness of public policy execution, public trust, and policy improvement within Malaysia Madani settings.

Research Objectives

Based on the Managerial Grid Leadership Theory by Blake and Mouton, this study intends:

- i. To explain the influence of leadership style on strategic communication effectiveness for policies execution within Malaysia Madani governance system.
- ii. Research Question
- iii. There is one guiding research question has established based on the gap identified:
- iv. How does leadership style, grounding in Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Theory influence the strategic communication effectiveness with in Malaysia Madani governance system?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Theory

This theory was developed by Robert R. Blake and Jane Mouton in 1964, who proposed five leadership patterns that are rooted in two main dimensions: (i) concern for people on the vertical grid and (ii) concern for results on the horizontal grid per illustration below.

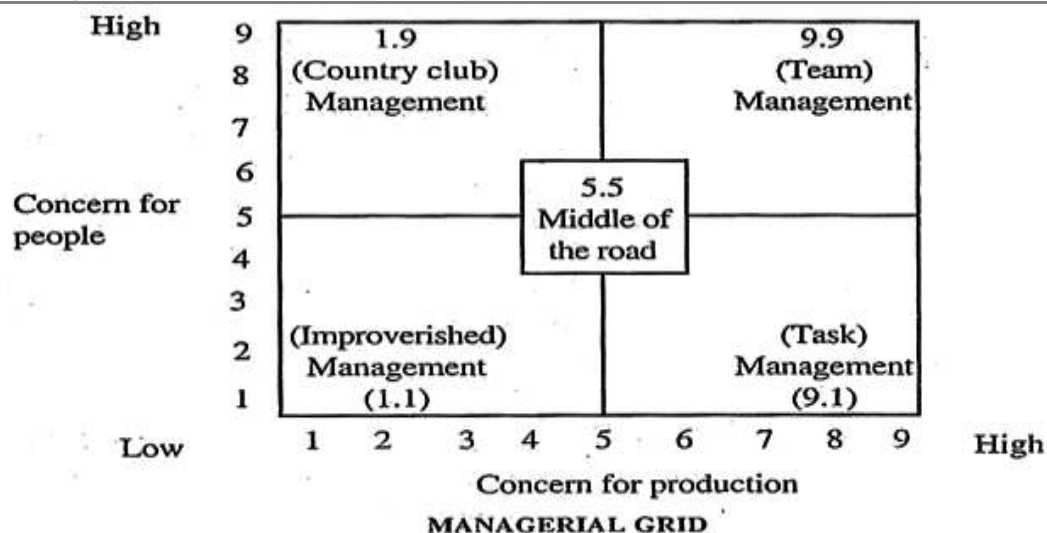


Figure 1: Model of Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Theory

Blake and Mouton refer Concern for People to the degree of consideration leaders have in putting the priorities of the team members first in achieving duties, while Concern for Results refers to the degree to which leaders prioritise outcome or achievement of the duties for organizational benefits. Figure 1 above shows the relationship between two dimensions, being Y-axis for Concern for people and X-axis for concerns for results with each ranging from 1 (low) and 9 (high).

As illustrated in Figure 1, the Managerial Grid positions these two dimensions on the Y-axis (concern for people) and X-axis (concern for results), each ranging from 1 (low) to 9 (high). The relationship between both dimensions is further explained through five leadership patterns, namely:

1. Country Club Style Leadership: This leadership style resembles a high concern for people and a low concern for results, which means the leaders put the needs and gratification of team members first as they convince the productivity is subject to the happiness ones have. Wok, Ismail, and Hussain (2003) asserted that this method has its both benefits and challenges, whereby unnecessary attention given to employee demand may affect the working pace, hence affect the organizational performance.

2. Impoverished Management: This pattern is featured by low concerns for both people and results, which means the leaders do not perceive any importance to the team members and results the members would produce for the organizational benefits, hence resulting poor team coordination, low organizational performance and poor motivation among members (Wok, Ismail, & Hussain, 2003).

3. Team Management: This pattern is characterized by a high concern for both people and results, whereby team cooperation and pledge are perceived very important factors that determine the leader-member relationship and productivity of an organization. Blake and Mouton suggested this pattern as the most efficient given the understanding that a balance attention to both people and results become important factors to organizational success (Wok, Ismail, & Hussain, 2003).

4. Task Management: This style prioritises a high concern for results and a low concern for people. Leaders perceive the team members performance, motivation, and the ability to complete the task by imposing stern regulations, control mechanisms and pressure to accomplishing the organizational benefits as more important as compared to having to fulfil the members expectation and satisfaction. This approach is workable for short term achievement, however in the long run, it could increase the employee turnover (Wok, Ismail, & Hussain, 2003).

5. Middle of the Road Management: This leadership pattern is a balanced between concern for both people and results. In this situation, the leaders tolerate minimal performance of employees, similarly the results of the performance. It also means that the leader is simply being moderate to both dimensions, which he expresses

necessary attention related to the employees, and at the same time accept average results produced by them (Wok, Ismail, & Hussain, 2003).

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Six Core Values of Malaysia Madani

The concept of Malaysia Madani is deeply-rooted in six core values, namely: sustainability, prosperity, innovation, respect, trust, and care and compassion. These values serve as the guiding principles for the Madani government in planning and developing and executing a comprehensive framework for the country development.

1. **Sustainability:** focuses on preserving the environment, expanding the economic potentials and providing a safe and harmonious well-being for Malaysians
2. **Prosperity:** focuses not only on the wealth and treasure, but also an inclusive growth for instance freedom and honour.
3. **Innovation:** inspires new concepts and ideas for enhancing the administrative efficiency and performance.
4. **Respect:** It is significantly important for a multi-cultural country like Malaysia to inculcate harmonious living and mutual consensus across ethnicity and religion background among its citizens.
5. **Trust:** this concept reflects government-citizen relationship, whereby the government must appear reliable, trustworthy and transparent for earning trust of the people.
6. **Care and Compassion:** the government demonstrates high attention level of empathy to the welfare of vulnerable citizens and react to those needs through policies and projects execution.

All these six values act as a collective framework in guiding the leadership behaviour, policy planning and execution, and strategic communication within the Madani settings.

Mohd Termizi and Ridzuan (2023) suggested that transparency, openness, responsibility, and receptiveness are important elements contributing to public trust towards government and its governance. Though Blake and Mouton's (1984) outlined multiculturalism and political order as contributing factors in leadership efficiency, an equal level of concerns for both people and results (which characterizes the Team Management style is truly meaningful in cultivating trust among the stakeholders and strategic communication within the cultural diversity settings,

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework on connection between leadership dimensions, leader-member relationships, effective strategic communication on the outcomes within Malaysia Madani settings grounded in Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Theory

Figure 2 depicts the relationship among various key variables. In this study, the Independent Variable refers to the Leadership Behaviour, which is defined as concern for people and concern for results. The Leader-Member Relationship which comprises trust, communication and engagement acts as the Mediator. The Dependent Variable which is strategic Communication effectiveness is identified by the clarity of message, credibility, and responsiveness, and finally, this study aims at providing an understanding the public trust, policy acceptance, and its execution. This framework suggests that leadership behaviour contributes to the administrative results through the leader-member relationships and communication efficiency as mediating roles.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study utilized a systematic literature review methodology which requires analysis and summary of prior scholarly sources to establish a conceptual framework of relationship between leadership behaviours and strategic communication within Malaysia Madani settings. This technique allows an inclusive emphasis to related theory, and policy documents, which support the theory formulation instead of hypothetical assumption.

Procedures of Data Collection

This study employs five systematic review processes proposed by Khan et.al. (2003):

- Determining the scope of study: to recognize relatable scholarly materials to Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid Leadership Theor, strategic communication, and Malaysia Madani values.
- Planning: to develop important elements of the study for instance, keywords and database selection based on Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar.
- Identification: to identify relevant peer-reviewed articles, policy documents, and official reports that support the core discussion of this study.
- Screening: To screen the selected scholarly materials according to the topics, synopsis, and full-text that synchronize with this study.
- Reporting: to analyze, summarize, and narrate the literature into themes that align with this study and eventually to form conceptual framework.
- Inclusion/Exclusion Requirements:
- This study has also prioritized recent scholarly published materials, from 2012 to date, for more current analysis and perspective.
- Both concept papers and empirical studies as well as policy related documents or reports in relation to leadership, communication, and governance.
- This study however, did not incorporate non-peer-reviewed materials or irrelevant input.

DISCUSSION

Team Management Leadership Pattern (9,9):

This leadership pattern seeks to create a balance relationship between people and organizational productivity through an effective strategic communication effort. This style positions the leaders as those who demonstrate high concerns for people and results by having constant open and honest interaction with various stakeholders, earning their confidence, particularly from public, and seeking public's endorsement. In the context of Malaysia Madani, the element of strategic communication acts as an apparatus for the leadership to seek public's acceptance and approval. Such approach is visible through a number of government socio-economic policies and programs which ultimately support the economic growth and societal welfare.

This leadership pattern which demonstrates high concern for both people and results has a direct influence on the leader-member relationship quality. While such a rapport is deeply engrained in openness and trust which act as mediators that increase the strategic communication efficiency, these values would eventually influence the public confidence and acceptance towards policies and their compliance. This trail underscores a

significant equality of both concerns for people and results operating with Madani governance through strategic communication.

The Progressive Wage Policy: This policy or later developed into a system, adopted from Singapore's Progressive Wage Model which aims to further reinforce their employment market through salary increase that is associated with the employees' productivity (Cheng & Zhang, 2024). There are myriads of empirical studies revealed that an increase of pay inspires the employees to perform better at workplace and at the same time enhance their skills by learning new skill sets. In the context of Madani governance, the introduction and implementation of the Progressive Wage Policy was intended to expand opportunity of the employee wages, meanwhile develop and explore more new skills and knowledge related to the job performance. This policy however, is not compulsory, yet many business owners including ones in the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) have chosen this new system for the benefits of their employees, who will ultimately get motivated to perform better and resulting in significant productivity of organizations (OECD, 2019). Adding to this, the World Bank (2020) has also further strengthened the point by asserting that the salary enhancement has a positive potential to a long-term productivity and employees' fulfilment and loyalty.

The National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR): This policy complies with the Ekonomi Madani framework by incorporating the element of environmental sustainability as Malaysia is moving towards a low-carbon country. The Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) in 2024 emphasized that the NETR policy was mainly to highlight on crucial issues facing a few key industrial players, namely transportation, electricity generation, and industrial consumption and how has their businesses operation been affecting the climate change and environmentalist and raise public concerns. Hence, this policy is looking at how to minimize the emissions gradually, yet sustain the green growth energy systems in Malaysia. The government has developed a framework that support investment within six primary energy spectrums, including renewable energy, hydrogen, bioenergy, green mobility, and carbon capture technologies, with anticipated financial gain and employment opportunities (IRENA, 2023).

Both Progressive Wage Policy and the National Energy Transition Roadmap (NETR) are consistent with the Ekonomi Madani principle which prioritise a balanced economic expansion, societal well-being and sustainable development in all aspects. These policies and programs are developed for long-term return and believe in a mutual beneficial relationship between people performance and institutional productivity, hence explaining the Team Management (9,9) leadership style that expresses high concern for both people and results as suggested by Blake and Mouton (1964). This leadership pattern establishes an idea of how the dimensions of high concern for both people and results allows policy acceptance and increases the strategic communication between governance agenda and public communication under the Malaysia Madani framework.

Country Club Management Leadership Pattern (1,9):

This leadership pattern expresses more concern on the people rather than the results they can produce. Relating this to strategic communication practices, this category of leaders expressing higher regards on interacting with their employees with care and compassion as a mean of enhancing positive rapport with them. From government perspective, this type of leader aims to ascertain their publics that greater emphasise is given to the public general well-being and needs. In the context of Madani governance, a few citizen-oriented policies, and programs have been planned and executed namely:

Sumbangan Tunai Rahmah (STR): This targeted-based economic initiative was developed and executed to provide financial assistance for the low-middle income households in facing the intensified cost of living. Bernama (2024) reported that the government has expanded budget allocated for this scheme alone nearly RM10 billion to benefit almost nine million beneficiaries. Mainly targeting the B40 groups, this monetary support has been directly transferred to the identified recipients to assist them in managing their basic necessities and minimize financial burden, to offer financial resilience and general well-being stability. The World Bank (2023) has also referred to this approach as a good instrument by the government as it is targeted that this instrument mechanism improves fiscal efficiency by replacing broad-based subsidies with more targeted welfare framework they have established for a social stability.

Sumbangan Asas Rahmah (SARA), which is a somewhat relatable to the one mentioned previously also offers in-kind support whereby the amount is credited directly into beneficiaries' MyKad for basic items purchase purposes, for instance, food, personal care products, and academic materials. Bernama (2024) reported that the Ministry of Finance in 2024 has increased its allocation to benefit hundred thousand of beneficiaries as well as widened the scope of purchasable items particularly for those with data recorded under the e-Kasih. Gentilini (2022) proclaimed that such government initiatives are crucial to ascertain food supply continues particularly among the vulnerable communities. A report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (2023) viewed this governmental effort as a mean of rectifying the economic uncertainty by providing continuous nutritional supply for the needy.

Menu Rahmah which was launched in 2023, is another people-centred program which was introduced under the Payung Rahmah scheme primarily aiming at ensuring meals affordability within regulated-prize-control policy. Bernama (2023) reported that this program has involved many food and beverages operators who agreed to offer meals with priced at RM5 or below and in-exchange for their participation, the government has offered them complementary measures such as cut-rate cost to essential cooking products. While this effort reflects the government collaboration with the business operators in curbing the increased price of meals, it does at the same time demonstrates the government initiative to support the business operations.

This tripartite relationship benefits all the three parties; government, vulnerable communities, and business operators in addressing issues of the people, strengthening the position of strategic communication by being sympathetic and receptiveness towards the public's well-being.

Authority–Compliance Management Leadership Pattern (9,1):

This style of leadership focuses more on the organisational productivity, policy execution, and its compliance, hence the strategic communication practice becomes prominent to ascertaining public knowledge, acceptance and support. Apparently, this approach might appear institutional, nevertheless, the effective communication is still a key in conveying the messages to the stakeholders. This patten of leadership is observed in a few Madani administrative policies, among them are:

Targeted Diesel Subsidy, which was executed in June 2024 has moved from non-targeted subsidy approach to a more focused system as there are mounting concerns on fuel smuggling, fiscal leakage, and ineffective subsidy division (Ministry of Finance [MOF], 2024; Reuters, 2024a). Though the retail prices of diesel, was altered however, the subsidies for Sabah, Sarawak, and Labuan remain given their heavy reliance over diesel consumption. In addition, the smallholders, farmers, and identified vehicle owners are among those who are entitled for monthly monetary aid via the BUDI Madani program, while the logistics operators benefit from the controlled priced under the

Subsidized Diesel Control System 2.0. Shittu et al., 2024; Sulaiman et al., 2022; and Abdul-Hakim et al., 2014 asserted that such targeted subsidy has transformed the effectiveness of policy hence become more appealing to the public. In addition to that, the monetary compensation credited into the selected recipients has sustained the well-being of vulnerable communities.

The Implementation of Electronic Invoicing (e-Invoice) by the Inland Revenue Board of Malaysia (LHDN), in August 2024 was made obligatory to the major taxpayers for producing digital invoices via MyInvois system. The Business Today (2024) reported that such a system has been introduced to allow the taxation process to become more open and accountable, to trace the real-time transaction and its authentication. This is one of the government initiatives to enhance the fiscal digitalization per Budget 2024, which gradually seek to refine the data accuracy, and trace any non-compliance related to this matter. iMoney (2024) stated that the e-invoicing system is useful for improving the governance effectiveness by synchronizing the taxation procedures, and The Star (2024) also reported that the government has given sufficient graceful period for the business operators to adapt to this newly executed policy.

This leadership pattern is result-driven and use extensively the communication strategically to ensure policy adherence and acceptance.

Middle-of-the-Road Management Leadership Pattern (5,5):

This leadership style aims at creating a stable and harmonious relationship between the organizational performance and employees' needs and expectations. In the context of governance, strategic communication becomes important as the 'amplifier' for the leaders to convey messages on policies planning and its execution to the various stakeholders group. This is important to ensure that the messages are well-understood by the stakeholders, and earn their trust and confidence, which is crucial for supporting the government agenda. There are a number of systems which are observable through governmental initiatives, among them are:

Public Service Remuneration System (SSPA) was introduced in 2024 to substitute the earlier structure with productivity-driven framework. The transformational agenda was executed in response to the public's concerns over an increase of cost of living, salary insufficiency among the public servants, and inflation issues which affecting their general well-being and sustainability. Ahmad et al., (2024) and Azmi et al., (2009) stated that the SSPA system was developed mainly to resolve the pay inadequacy in the public sector, particularly by connecting the wages advancement with productivity, instead of general pay raise. Hence, this encourages all public sector members to enhance their skills and knowledge to stay competitive within this merit-based approach. In short, this leadership style resembles a realistic communication approach where policy messaging is shaped through tolerance and acceptance while maintaining administration and stakeholder stability.

Impoverished Management Leadership Pattern (1,1)

This leadership pattern demonstrates limited attention for both people and results of organization; which resulted poor engagement among stakeholders, and insufficient effort in message conveyance. These insufficiencies may contribute to low level of public trust towards government, suggesting that the leaders do not perform adequate roles to stay communicative and responsive to the public. Looking from Madani governance context, there is one obvious example reflecting this management pattern, though it is not intended.

The 12th Malaysia Plan (12MP), according to Bernama (2024) which reported the Auditor-General's Report disclosed that 169 out of 3,942 development projects were behind schedule, while an extensive number of plans are still at the early or pre-implementation phases. The Business Today (2024) ascribed these delays potentially due to insufficient project supervision, inappropriate procurement processes, and strategic communication in coordinating situations across executing bodies. This situation may affect the perceived deliverability of public service sector and their accountability. Despite the inclusiveness of policy planning, the definite factor on how effective the policy is assessed by the capability of its execution. Pressman and Wildavsky (1984) mentioned that a policy collapse not due to the basic policy formulation, but often it depends on the weak execution strategies, poor team coordination, and incompetent administration. Hill and Hupe (2022) assumed that overlapping authorities and knowledge insufficiency in project execution are the gaps for a successful project management. Hence, in this context, the interruptions and disorganizations in project execution might indicate administrative challenges, instead of policy inefficiency alone.

In short, this leadership pattern shows how insufficient leadership participation is connected closely with poor interaction with stakeholders, which ultimately could impact the messages conveyance process and decrease the coordination of project execution.

CONCLUSION

An effective government demands not only dominant leaders, but also the ones who are capable to conveying policies, programs, projects effectively, interacting with stakeholders expressively, and establishing a meaningful relationship with the public beneficially. Grounded in Blake and Mouton' Managerial Grid Leadership Theory, this study emphasizes on how the leadership behaviour which are rooted in two dimensions: concern for people and concern for results could have an influence on the effectiveness of strategic communication within Madani governance settings. This theory suggests five leadership styles, namely Team Management, Country Club Management, Middle of the Road Management, Authority Compliance Management, and Impoverished Management which explain how the leader-members relationship

and results shape leadership behaviour and, consequently, communication effectiveness. In relation to the six values of Madani framework; trust, care and compassion, respect, sustainability, innovation, and prosperity, they act as guiding principles for government agenda and policies. This framework is significant as it provides a conceptual basis for understanding how leadership orientation influences the relationship between government and citizens, and how strategic communication can be strengthened through balanced leadership practices. Thus, the proposed conceptual framework contributes to strategic communication literature by explaining how different leadership behaviours influence communication effectiveness and ultimately support the execution of Malaysia Madani governance.

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