

Transformational Leadership and Subordinate's Work Performance in Penang Private Higher Learning Institutions

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Abstract: Malaysia's private higher education institutions (HEIs) aim to provide high-quality teaching to shape and generate the nation's human capital for its development. Due to competition among HEIs, the institution has been pressured to provide high-quality education to maintain its long-term viability. In this regard, private HEIs need leaders who can drive change to overcome all obstacles, especially in terms of improving the performance of academics and the organization. As a result, the study's main aim is to investigate the relationship between transformative leadership and employee work performance. The research group believes that the findings of the study will contribute to theoretical knowledge, with the combination of transformational leadership traits and job performance providing a new approach to labour market research. Data were obtained from 109 respondents from three private HEIs in Penang using quantitative research methods based on purposive sampling for descriptive and inferential analysis. The Bass and Avolio Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 6S (MLQ-6S) for transformational leadership (1985) and the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IW PQ) to assess individual work performance were used in this study. According to the findings, transformational leadership has a good and significant relationship with job performance. Specifically, dimensions of ideal influence, inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation are four aspects of the transformational leadership style that have a positive effect on employee work performance. Consequently, leaders and managers should model this behaviour in the workplace.

Keywords: Transformational leadership, work performance, higher learning institution

I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership skills are essential in attracting and retaining high-quality staff. Workplace leadership styles, in theory, when coupled with poor leadership methods from various levels of management, can influence employee attitudes and behaviours. In today's competitive environment, it is important to develop effective leaders who can guide the organization. When faced with obstacles in a constantly changing environment, good leaders are thought to try to improve the work performance of subordinates and the organization. This point is clearly stated by Nor Aishah, Hasnah, and Daing Mohd Nasir (2019) that studying successful leadership styles can be used as a business strategy for HEI management to improve organizational performance. HEIs should provide the necessary

resources to stimulate creativity among the staff so that institutions can sustain themselves in the long run. Accordingly, private HEIs in Malaysia need leaders who can lead the transformation needed to overcome all problems, especially in terms of improving academic and organizational performance. In this regard, transformational leaders are trusted and said to be able to manage change and can adapt to influence their followers (Saad Alessa, 2021). As a result, through this study, the research group is interested in detecting whether there is still a significant relationship between transformational leadership behaviour and subordinate work performance in private HEIs, especially in the context of Malaysia.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership (TL)

A quality leader should earn the trust of his followers and be able to motivate and influence the quality of work done. Burns' response to TL as a joint activity between leaders and followers lifts each other to a higher moral and motivational level. Next, Bass (1985) improved the concept of TL as a leadership paradigm that is authentic and fair, has clear objectives, sets high expectations, encourages, supports, and gives appreciation to others, arouses people's emotions, teaches people to think beyond self-interest own. In this regard, a leader is identified as an individual who inspires others to achieve positive change by increasing the goals, aspirations, and beliefs of subordinates. In this regard, the four dimensions of TL are ideal influence (attributes and behaviour), inspirational motivation, individual consideration, and intellectual stimulation. Every leader needs to deepen the approach of the four dimensions of TL in helping his followers overcome the obstacles faced in uncertain times and finally achieve the organization's goals by using abilities such as motivation and encouragement.

(a) Idealized influence

Ideal influence refers to the leader's charisma as a source of respect, adoration, trust, and a role model among his followers. Leaders may be able to inspire followers to improve their performance standards by getting them interested in imitating the leader. The principles, beliefs, moral judgments, and behaviours of leaders are all imitated. Accordingly, Wahyudi (2014) also emphasized that ideal influence requires being an

example to employees and being willing to sacrifice for the greater good. Several studies link leaders' charisma, ethics, and capacity to communicate their vision to their followers to ideal influence (Brown, Paz-Aparicio, Revilla, 2019). In other words, people with the ideal aspect of influence usually have excellent communication skills and can easily convey their vision to their subordinates. Furthermore, they can bring individuals together to achieve their goals. Indirectly, followers are proud to be associated with leaders who are their role models in a perfect influence model. These role models are always willing to put their interests aside for the greater good of the business. Ideal influence characteristics encourage subordinates to develop and learn new skills, helping them develop self-identity, self-confidence, and well-being, which increases their job satisfaction.

(b) Inspirational motivation

Inspirational motivation refers to the leader's ability to imagine a bright future for his followers by understanding expectations and showing devotion to a shared goal or vision (Bilal, Ahsen, Asad, Sajjad, Adnan, & Hassan, 2019). Aligning individual needs with organizational needs will increase team morale. Transformational leaders need to use both influencing and communicative approaches that are effective in encouraging teamwork by connecting the individual needs of employees with organizational needs. This will encourage and increase awareness of the mission, vision, and shared goals of the organization among subordinates. This is proven through the study of Chebon, Aruasa, and Chirchir (2019) found that inspirational motivation is concerned with employee motivation to increase self-motivation to be more productive and achieve better work performance.

(c) Intellectual stimulation

Next, transformational leaders will use intellectual stimulation to encourage their followers to consider challenges from different perspectives. Practising intellectual stimulation, according to Bass (1985), aims to encourage people to continuously improve by putting fresh ideas to work and challenging long-held practices and traditions. If leaders dare to challenge the status quo and persuade their followers to use innovation and creativity in their daily work, they are said to be involved in intellectual stimulation (Bilal et al., 2019). Subordinates who work for leaders with intellectual stimulation characteristics are motivated to use new and inventive solutions to tackle classic challenges. Subordinates will be challenged to examine and address problems using their intelligence and critical thinking. Accordingly, transformative leaders who engage in intellectual stimulation will involve employees in decision-making and encourage them to solve problems by examining them from multiple perspectives and using innovative problem-solving techniques. Employees' performance is effective, and they are willing to work more, according to Ogola, Sikalieh, and Linge (2017), since their supervisors encourage people to think critically before making any decisions, as well as support creativity and innovation in the workplace. In conclusion, the researchers concluded that

intellectual stimulation is an essential component in tackling complex challenges using creativity and new techniques.

(d) Individual consideration

Finally, leaders who possess the nature of individual consideration focus on the needs, hopes, and development of their followers (Sims, Carter, & De Peralta, 2020). Individual concern refers to the way a leader cares for followers as a mentor, coach, or guide. He empathizes with the issues and needs of his subordinates and provides appropriate support. Meaning, each employee is treated as a unique individual with desires, interests, and self-development needs by a leader who practices customized considerations. Therefore, personal guidance such as guidance and individual recognition is important to these leaders in addressing and motivating employees to realize their full potential, engage, accept change, and, most importantly, make the best work decisions (Kari & Rinne, 2018). Next, Shore and Chung (2021) have asserted that leaders who treat employees as individuals with different needs will encourage them to perform better in general. Considering the various findings from these various studies, researchers are eager to learn more about the relationship between leaders' customized judgments and subordinates' work effectiveness in private HEIs.

Work Performance

Actions or behaviours taken to achieve objectives are referred to as work performance. It is a metric to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of a person in performing a task in a certain period. Employee job performance is important to the success or failure of an organization because its employees determine its success or failure. Performance is a measure of a person's ability to perform assigned tasks promptly to meet organizational goals (Khaled & Hameen, 2017). Accordingly, Eliyana, Ma'arif, and Muzakki (2019) also explained that work performance is referred to as the level of achievement when work is done by individuals in an organization. In this regard, the three main components of organizational work performance are strongly influenced, according to Simanjuntak (2011), namely organizational support, management ability, and the work performance of each employee. As a result, the quality of a company's labour has a major impact on its success.

In the workplace, Katz and Kahn (1978) were the first group of researchers to distinguish between task and contextual performance. Other studies have subsequently been conducted to investigate various aspects of work performance. Furthermore, individual work performance is a concern of every organization that also receives the attention of researchers. Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, Schaufeli, De Vet Henrica, & Van Der Beek (2011), for example, a group of researchers interested in work performance conducted a scientific study and performed a quantitative analysis developing the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWQP). Accordingly, Koopmans (2014) and his research group (Koopmans, Bernaards, Hildebrandt, van Buuren, van der Beek, de Vet, 2013) through a study carried out, has concluded that individual work performance (IWP) has three

dimensions: task performance, contextual performance, and unproductive work.

Task performance, in general, refers to a person's ability to perform tasks that support the organization's operational goals. Specifically, job performance refers to an individual's ability to fulfil the essential functions of a job (Koopmans et al., 2014). This dimension includes the ability to plan and coordinate work, as well as the quality of work, the emphasis on results, and the speed at which it is done. It emphasizes a person's ability to perform a particular task or activity to a high standard. An employee is said to be efficient in performing a task if he completes the task within the time frame and without making any mistakes.

The second dimension is contextual performance, often known as relational performance, which is important in work performance due to the psychological, social, and organizational effects, which can increase organizational effectiveness (Meyers, Kooij, Kroon, de Reuver, van Woerkom, 2019). In addition to primary activities, contextual performance refers to additional behaviours and actions that contribute to organizational success. This involves the ability to give extra effort, initiative, and willingness to take on challenging tasks, as well as the ability to learn new skills (Koopmans et al., 2011). Although contextual performance is not a mandatory job requirement, it benefits the company indirectly by facilitating task completion. It helps shape the social and cultural perspective of employees, which in turn increases the effectiveness of actions and processes (Ingusci, Spagnoli, Zito, Colombo, & Cortese, 2019).

Contrary to the first two dimensions, the third dimension of counterproductive work behaviour is separate. Workplace nonconformity, also known as counterproductive work behaviour, is a type of discretionary behaviour that violates key organizational rules, putting employees and the company's health at risk. Formal and informal rules and practices, as well as core moral values, are part of organizational rules or norms (Feldman, 1984). Workplace nonconformity has been defined by Conlon, Meyer, and Nowakowski (2005) as voluntary actions made by employees to hurt the organization. Employees' lack of willingness to comply with the company's normative rules, and instead choose to defy them, explain the voluntary nature of counterproductive work behaviour. Excessive complaining and criticism, taking actions that harm the organization, inappropriate use of organizational expertise, time, and resources, and poor quality of work are all examples of bad behaviour that affects organizational success. Unproductive work behaviour of subordinates, such as sickness, can affect the organization if not dealt with effectively. This form of negative behaviour is critical to organizational psychology because an upward trend in the work performance domain has been identified.

Relationship between Transformational Leadership and Work Performance

Transformational leaders need to be able to persuade their followers to work towards a common goal. The work

performance of employees is evaluated through their effectiveness and efficiency in performing the tasks given to meet the organization's objectives. Accordingly, most academics have tried to determine the impact of TL practices in both public and private enterprises on the performance of their employees over the years. For example, studies by Buil, Martinez, and Matute (2019) as well as Rita, Payangan, Rante, Tuhumena, and Erari (2018) have detected a positive relationship between TL style and employee performance. The findings of these studies have rejected the non-significant relationship obtained by past researchers on the relationship between TL variables and work performance.

According to Bass's (1985) research, there was a strong link between job performance and TL. Muhammad Shukri and Rosli (2014) conducted a quantitative analysis of public HLIs to investigate the link between TL and corporate entrepreneurship and academic leader performance. The studies revealed that TL and corporate entrepreneurship had a strong link to academic leader performance. Furthermore, the study shows that to strengthen public HLIs, academicians with TL traits should be chosen to run the institutions. Although public HLI settings differ from private HLIs, TL may play a role in private HLIs as well. TL emphasizes engaging people's hearts and minds, as opposed to another leadership style that inspires using the best incentives and punishment system.

The supervisor's TL has a moderate link with an individual's emotional intelligence and work performance, according to Chen, Bian, and Hou (2015). Leaders using the TL style are seen to be able to change an organization's vision and goals for its employees. Employees who can identify with the organization's ideals and goals are more willing to devote more time and effort to the organization, and as a result, they will produce good job results. Lor and Zubair (2017) recommend emphasizing supportive and TL behaviour among managers because these behaviours have a direct impact on staff performance or productivity. According to Al-Swidi, Nawawi, and Al-Hosam (2012), TL has a good impact on employee behaviour, and it is the employee TL styles that guide them to perform. Many researchers (Roslan et al., 2013) have discovered that TL style has a favourable impact on performance.

Lecturers in the higher education sector, in a study by Jyoti and Bhau (2015), have found that TL has an indirect effect on performance through leader-member exchange and satisfaction with leaders. Leaders can influence the ability of their followers to work efficiently for the organization, which will ultimately improve their job performance by fostering positive attitudes and behaviours in subordinates. The findings of Jyoti and Bhau (2015) have strengthened the researchers' belief that transformational leadership has an influence on subordinate performance in both private and public enterprises, including education.

Andy
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Timothy, Andy, Victoriaa, and Idowu (2011) who have studied the impact of leadership styles on small-scale organizational performance have shown the results that intellectual stimulation and individual consideration characteristics of TL apply positive but not-so-important implications on employee and their performance. Conversely, inspirational motivation shows a negative but insignificant influence on performance. The study concluded that instead of practising TL while the business is still on a small scale, enterprises should slowly plan for change by adopting the TL style as their organization develop and grow. It means TL is not necessarily suitable to be practised in all organizations.

Timothy et al. (2011), who investigated the impact of leadership styles on small-scale organizational performance, discovered that TL's intellectual stimulation and individual consideration features have favourable but little effect on employees and their performance. In contrast, inspiring motivation has a negative but minor impact on performance. Instead of practising TL while the business is still small, the study suggested that businesses should gradually plan for change by adopting the TL style as their organization develops and grows. It follows that TL is not appropriate for use in all companies.

Herningsih, Abdul Yuli, Mardiyono, and Suryati (2014) discovered that the TL style had no significant effects on employee performance, implying that the high and low values of the TL style did not affect the value of employees' performance. As a result, it was claimed that the actual leadership style had little bearing on the performance of employees. In general, the findings of this study differ from those of other studies, particularly in areas connected to the identification of variables to measure an educational institution's performance, such as TL style, organizational environment, and organizational culture.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study uses a quantitative approach to examining the relationship between both TL and WP variables. This approach emphasizes more numbers and figures in the data collection and data analysis process (Bryman, 2001). Connolly (2007) agreed that a lot of resources and energy would be saved by using the quantitative research method since computerized statistical systems can be used to calculate data collected like numbers, percentages, or any other measurable figures. In this study, the researchers used a cross-sectional descriptive research design to answer the research questions. A cross-sectional study is a type of research that is implemented at one selected date or over a selected time frame. It is usually done to perform judgment on the frequency of an outcome for a selected population (Levin, 2006). This type of study involves different samples from a population of different levels. Each sample representing a cross-section of each level is surveyed at the same point in time. Hence the data gathered is representative of each cross-section of the population. This is relatively inexpensive and less time-consuming to conduct. However, the result derived from

this type of study only results at that moment, which means different results and conclusions may be drawn if different timing was chosen to perform the study.

Research Population and Sampling

Of the 118 respondents involved in this study, 9 sets of responses were detected as not meeting the respondent selection criteria. Thus, only 109 responses were received. Overall, out of the 109 respondents, 40 or 36.7% were male, while 69 or 63.3% were female. This shows that more female respondents than male respondents took part in this research. Most of the respondents were 45–55 years old (42.2%), and about one-third (32.1%) of the respondents were 34–44 years old. This indicates that almost 75% of the respondents were between the ages bracket of 34 to 55. 94.5% of the lecturers who responded are holding a bachelor's degree / professional qualification and above. On top of that, 42% of the respondents have been working in the HLIs for at least 9 years. This is an indication that respondents know their leaders long enough to provide more accurate responses about their leaders' leadership styles.

Research Instrumentation

The instrument of this study is a set of questionnaires that have been adapted from instruments that have been developed by previous researchers. For this purpose, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire Form 6S (MLQ-6S) was adapted as this research's survey questionnaire. The multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) was created by Bass and Avolio (2004) based on a study done on many different disciplines. Thus, its validity and reliability were proven.

MLQ-6S is one of the versions of the questionnaire that comprises a total of twenty-one items to measure seven factors of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership (Bass, & Avolio, 2004). Twenty-one items are included in MLQ-6S to measure different leadership styles i.e., TL, Contingent Reward, Management-by-Exception, and Laissez-Faire under seven dimensions. For this research purpose, only four dimensions with twelve items of the multi-factor leadership scale were used because the researcher only wants to focus on the TL style. Each item measures the leadership style using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all, 2 = Occasionally, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, and 5 = Frequently, if not always). Besides adapting MLQ-6S to measure the extent of the TL style practised by the leader, the Individual Work Performance Questionnaire (IWPQ) by Koopmans (2014) was used to measure individual work performance (IWP). IWPQ was designed to overcome other limitations of other instruments with the purpose to measure IWP like the inability to measure all aspects of IWP and cannot be generally applied to employees from different types of jobs (Koopmans et al., 2013). IWP which is defined as "employee behaviours or actions that are relevant to the goals of the organization", is important to measure workplace performance. The IWPQ was developed for research purposes as a short questionnaire to measure IWP in a general population. It incorporates all three dimensions of IWP namely task performance (TP), contextual

performance (CP), and counterproductive work behaviour (CThaWB)) (Koopmans et al., 2013). The TP and CP scales had a 5-point rating scale ranging from 1 = seldom, 2 = sometimes, 3 = frequently, 4 = often, to 5 = always. The CWB rating scale ranged from 1 = never, 2 = seldom, 3 = sometimes, 4 = frequently, to 5 = often. The IWPQ is a generic instrument which is proper to be used for employees from any occupation.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was conducted on 30 lecturers from one of the HLIs in Malaysia aimed at understanding the feasibility of this study design. It also aims to predict any problems that will be encountered in the planning and modification of key studies to ensure the clarity and reliability of the study instruments. In this pilot study, Browne (1995) recommended that 30 samples are used was sufficient to determine the consistency and suitability of the items. In this regard, Cronbach's Alpha was used to measure the level of reliability of the study items. Cronbach's alpha (α) tells how close a set of test items are connected as a group. A lot of sources said an alpha score above .70 is acceptable. .80 or greater is preferred (Cortina, 1993). Findings have shown the overall Cronbach's Alpha reliability result was .912 for the 30 items of the research instrument used in this research. According to Ursachi, Horodnic, and Zait (2015), a generally accepted rule is that Cronbach's Alpha of .6 to .7 indicates an acceptable level of reliability, and .8 or greater indicates a very good level of reliability. A Cronbach's Alpha which measured in-between .812 to .956 for every item of the research instruments used reflected that all the items are in a reliable and acceptable range. The reliability may have been because the instrument items had been used successfully in many previous research studies. In other words, the researcher could confidently use the results generated later from the research instruments to derive the research conclusion. Accordingly, content validity tests are intended to test the extent to which test items measure the characteristics of the test they were designed for. Since this questionnaire has been used in various leadership studies, the researcher has decided not to test the validity of this study.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The correlation between the four dimensions of TP and work performance among subordinates in private HLIs in Penang was calculated using SPSS software. The Pearson Correlation analysis was used to determine the linear relationship between each corresponding variable. A correlation of .01 to .3 indicates a weak positive relationship, a correlation of .31 to .69 indicates a moderate positive relationship and a correlation above .7 indicates a strong positive relationship. On the other hand, a correlation of -.01 to -.3 indicates a weak negative relationship, a correlation of -.31 to -.69 indicates a moderate negative relationship and a correlation below -.7 indicates a strong negative relationship.

The results indicate that there was a positive and significant relationship between idealized influence ($r = .394$); inspirational motivation ($r = .363$), intellectual stimulation ($r = .350$) and individual consideration ($r = .327$) of leaders and

subordinates' work performance in private HLIs in Penang. The results imply that an increase in all TL behaviours in private HLIs in Penang would result in an improvement in the subordinates' ability to perform their jobs. These relationships are also seen as significant and thus up to 99% of the relationship is not due to chance. The result of this research indicates that TL has a positive relationship with work performance among subordinates in private HLIs in Penang. The correlations of each dimension in TL with subordinates' work performance through Pearson's Correlation show a moderate positive relationship.

The results of this study suggest that raising the dimension of TL behaviour at private HEIs in Penang will enhance followers' ability to perform their jobs effectively. This is consistent with the findings of the study by Davood et al. (2014), who defined the ideal influence as a necessity to achieve employee engagement and, as a result, have a favourable impact on employee performance.

As a result, our findings also indicate that improving the inspirational motivational behaviours of leaders in private HLIs in Penang would improve employees' job output. This result is consistent with a study by Chebon et al. (2019), which demonstrated that inspirational motivation is concerned with encouraging followers to become more self-motivated, which is then exercised in enhancing their job performance, motivating them to be more productive and achieve better results in their work.

The research's conclusions also showed that there is a positive and moderate association between subordinates' work performance in private HLIs in Penang and the intellectual stimulation of leaders. When a leader exhibits intellectual stimulation traits, subordinates are inspired to overcome old issues in novel and imaginative ways. This result is consistent with Cheung and Wong's (2010) finding that employee creativity and intellectual stimulation are positively correlated. The study by Ogola et al. (2017), which demonstrated that employees' performance was successful because their leaders pushed them to think critically before making any decisions and promoted creativity and innovation in the workplace, further validated this.

Lastly, there is a positive and moderate relationship between the idealized influence of leaders and work performance among subordinates in private HLIs in Penang. The results demonstrate that an increase in the individual consideration behaviour used in private HLIs in Penang would result in an improvement in the output of the subordinates. This result is consistent with research by Ogola et al. (2017), which concluded that motivating people to perform better requires leaders to treat them as unique persons with unique needs. This study disagrees with Tahir's (2015) findings that transformative leaders' acts of individual consideration have no discernible impact on staff performance. Additionally, it goes against the findings of Juma and Ndisya (2016), who discovered that individualised consideration had a detrimental effect on staff performance.

V. RESEARCH IMPLICATION

These results will aid leaders in comprehending how transformational leadership affects their followers. For an organisation to succeed, leaders and employees must work together to achieve a shared corporate goal. A leader who uses inspiring motivation establishes a distinct vision and objective. He or she will also be able to match each subordinate's needs with the organization's general needs. To do this, the leaders could foster a welcoming and inclusive workplace. For instance, managers should regularly inform staff members of departmental goals and organisational changes. In addition, managers should encourage their team, particularly senior employees, to engage in decision-making so that everyone may share their thoughts, and no one will be left out of the conversations. This type of healthy atmosphere not only helps to keep a healthy relationship between leaders and subordinates, but it will also help to build trust in the heart and minds of subordinates. This in turn will improve the morale of subordinates to work hard in attaining the organizational goals.

VI. CONCLUSION

One of the elements influencing how well individuals perform at work in an organisation is the leadership style. The researcher's goal is for this research to assist educational institutions in reviewing the number of leaders' perceived leadership style (TL) usage and their level of self-rated work performance. The management of educational institutions may attempt to enhance it by giving the leaders who serve as role models for the rest of the workforce appropriate leadership training if they knew what types of TL behaviours were less frequently shown among the leaders. On the other side, this research also gives management the chance to see the discrepancies between their perspective and that of the employees in terms of job performance satisfaction levels. The administration of the institutions can find the ideal answers to the issues by being aware of the gaps. Additionally, the findings of this study, which indicate a strong and favourable association between TL and work performance, might be used as a suitable benchmark for any upcoming improvement initiatives.

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