

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Organization Performance in Pahang: Exploring the Moderating Role of Ethical Practices

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is an important factor in determining an organisation's performance. In this framework, transformational leadership serves as the independent variable, while organisational performance acts as the dependent variable. Then, ethical practices as a moderating variable to evaluate how strongly an organisation ethical climate alters or reinforces the connection between leadership styles and final performance outcomes. This research focuses on organisational leaders in Pahang. The study collected data through questionnaires distributed to 339 leaders representing various organisations in the state. The responses were then analysed using SPSS version 30 and SmartPLS version 4 to ensure accurate and reliable findings. The study is guided by three main objectives. First, it aims to explore the relationship between transformational leadership and organisational performance in Pahang. Second, it seeks to understand how ethical practices influence organisational performance. Finally, the study about the ethical practices as a moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and organisational performance.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Ideological differences between political leaders and civil servants can create challenges for organisations in achieving their objectives and sustaining effective performance, particularly within the government sector (Spengkuch et al., 2023). Political leaders may focus on party priorities, electoral commitments, and immediate political considerations, while civil servants are generally expected to uphold established procedures, remain politically neutral, and ensure continuity in government administration (Colonnelli et al., 2020; Spengkuch et al., 2023). Differences in political and administrative perspectives may result in conflicts, competing priorities, and difficulties in maintaining a consistent approach to policy implementation. These challenges can become more apparent following elections, particularly when changes in political leadership lead to shifts in government priorities and administrative direction (Aghion et al., 2016; Spengkuch et al., 2023). Some organisations continue to depend on traditional practices, that difficult for them to respond effectively to current challenges and keep up with technological changes such as assumptions, beliefs, and traditions are deeply embedded within the organization (Hosna et al., 2021; Deng et al., 2023). Effective

leadership involves adopting new way to solve the problem rather than relying solely on traditional methods (Avolio et al., 2002; Burn, 2003; Idris et al., 2022). Maintaining ethical standards can be challenging for leaders, particularly when they are faced with complex ethical issues in their decision-making. These issues may include self-interest, the concept of “dirty hands,” accountability, moral luck, the use of power, diversity, and spirituality (Ezeanyim et al., 2021). A leader’s weaknesses may become more apparent when personal interests are influenced by the power, wealth, and other individual considerations (Keohane, 2014; Ezeanyim et al., 2021; Valgarðsson et al., 2021). A lack of either competence or integrity can undermine a leader’s credibility and reduce the support they receive from others (Garzia, 2011; Clarke et al., 2018; Valgarðsson et al., 2021).

1.2 Research Objectives and Significance of the Study

This objectives of this study:

1. To examine the relationship between transformational leadership is related to organisational performance in Pahang.
2. To examine the role of ethical practices in influencing organisational performance in Pahang.
3. To examine whether ethical practices moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and organisational performance in Pahang.

1.3 State Hypotheses and Their Correspondence to Research Design

Based on these relationships, three hypotheses are proposed as follows:

H1: Transformational leadership significant effect performance in the organisation in Pahang.

H2: Ethical practices have a significant effect on performance in the organisation.

H3: Ethical practices moderate have the significant effect between transformational leadership and organisational performance in Pahang.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organisational Performance

Performance can be understood as the ability to effectively carry out an activity and produce the intended outcomes. The importance of performance can be illustrated through the human hand, which is a complex biological structure that enables individuals to perform a wide range of precise and coordinated activities (Vaczi et al., 2021). Its flexibility and dexterity is the important role in human interaction and development, demonstrating how the ability to perform different tasks can support broader cultural and social development (Vaczi et al., 2021; Bagyura et al., 2025). Furthermore, traditional perspectives have often viewed the left and right hands as representing different moral and social meanings. These interpretations are closely linked to the cultural values and social structures of a society. The term “hand” may also be used to describe human qualities such as ability, strength, skill, agility, and control. In this sense, the meaning of the hand goes beyond its physical function and can be associated with the exercise of power and the formation of moral judgements in society (Vaczi et al., 2021).

2.2 Transformational Leadership

Leadership involves influencing and guiding individuals towards the achievement of shared goals. Beyond directing followers, leaders contribute to social and economic change by encouraging new ideas, supporting development, and responding to changing societal needs (Akinniyi et al., 2021). The intellectual stimulation, transformational leaders encourage followers to consider new ideas, approach problems from different perspectives, and challenge established ways of thinking (Hosna et al., 2021). Leaders who demonstrate intellectual stimulation encourage their followers to consider new ideas and explore different approaches to solving organisational problems. The values innovation and critical thinking, this leadership approach can help organisations respond to challenges and adapt to changing circumstances more effectively (Cetin, et al., 2015; Hosna et al., 2021).

2.3 Ethical Practices

Ethics can be understood as the normative study of human conduct, particularly voluntary actions and the principles used to determine whether such actions are considered appropriate or inappropriate. In everyday life, people commonly use terms such as “good” and “bad” to describe different behaviours, actions, or situations. To further understand the different meanings of “good” and “bad”, axiology, also known as the study of values, provides a useful framework for examining how values are defined and interpreted. Axiology focuses on different dimensions of values and helps distinguish between various interpretations of what is considered good or bad (Lillie, 2020; Traianou, 2024). In addition, Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development provides an important perspective for understanding how individuals develop moral reasoning and make ethical judgements (Thiroux et al., 2014; Belgasem-Hussain et al., 2023). Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development identifies three main levels of moral reasoning: pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional, with the post-conventional level also referred to as the autonomous or principled level. These levels describe the progression of individuals’ moral reasoning and reflect how their understanding of right and wrong develops over time (Thiroux et al., 2014; Belgasem-Hussain et al., 2023).

2.4 Relationship Between Transformational Leadership and Performance of Organisation

This study positions transformational leadership as the independent variable and organizational performance as the dependent variable to map out how visionary leadership drives overall success. Lillie et al. (2020) examined various leadership characteristics and their relationship with organisational performance, demonstrating the relevance of leadership characteristics in shaping organisational outcomes. Craig (2021) further highlighted that different Effective leadership plays an important role in supporting organisational success, as demonstrated by their findings. To build upon this perspective in the current study, shifting the spotlight directly onto how these factors shape organisational performance. To examined adaptive and maladaptive narcissism in leaders and found that these characteristics may influence the perception of charisma in leadership performance. (Baur et al., 2024).

2.5 Relationship Between Ethical Practices and Performance of Organisation

Ethical practices serve as the moderating variable in this study and are examined in terms of their potential to influence the strength or direction of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables. The dependent variable, organisational performance, represents the extent to which organisations are able to achieve their objectives and perform their respective roles effectively. The inclusion of ethical practices as a moderator allows the study to examine whether ethical considerations affect the relationship between leadership styles and organisational performance (Faliza et al., 2024). In addition to guiding organisational decision-making and behaviour, ethical practices may also influence the relationship between organisational effectiveness and performance. When considered as a moderating variable, ethical practices may affect the positives of this relationship. Therefore, integrating ethical considerations into organisational practices may support improved outcomes and contribute to sustainable organisational performance (Faliza et al., 2024).

2.6 Ethical Practice on Transformational Leadership and Performance of Organisation

Ethical practices involve the principles that guide appropriate behaviour and moral standards within an organisation. These practices emphasise honesty, integrity, and trust, which are important in promoting organisational efficiency and supporting effective leadership (Alkipsy et al., 2020; Al Naqbi et al., 2021). Leaders play an important role in establishing ethical standards by encouraging awareness of ethical behaviour and how it can contribute to better organisational performance (Kang, 2019; Alkipsy et al., 2020). In addition, work ethics can influence on organisational performance. Ethical leadership may create a supportive environment that encourages employees to develop creative approaches and improve their overall performance (Ahmad et al., 2019; Alkipsy et al., 2020). This study found that effective ethical practices is significantly related to organisational performance. Leaders who practise strong ethical principles can build trust and accountability among employees and have the positive organisational culture that supports better performance (Kang, 2019; Alkipsy et al., 2020).

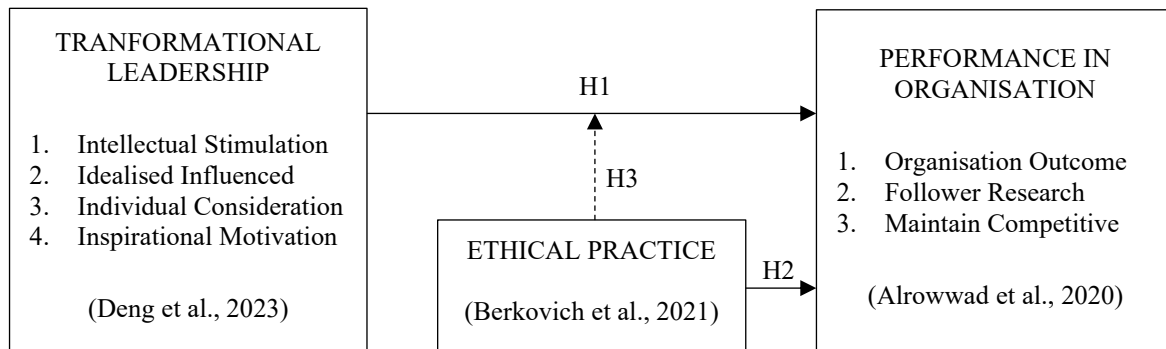


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Impact of Transformational Leadership on Organisation Performance in Pahang: Exploring the Moderating Role of Ethical Practices

The research framework consists of three key components: the independent variable, moderating variable, and dependent variable. Transformational leadership is identified as the independent variable and is measured through four dimensions, namely intellectual stimulation, idealised influence, individual consideration, and inspirational motivation. To build upon this perspective in the current study, shifting the spotlight directly onto how these factors shape organisational performance. Meanwhile, organisational performance as the dependent variable and comprises three dimensions: organisational outcomes, follower research, and maintaining competitiveness. In the research framework, H1, H2, and H3 represent Hypothesis 1, Hypothesis 2, and Hypothesis 3, respectively.

H1: Transformational leadership significant effect performance in the organisation in Pahang.

H2: Ethical practices have a significant effect on performance in the organisation.

H3: Ethical practices moderate have the significant effect between transformational leadership and organisational performance in Pahang.

3. Method

3.1 Data Analysis

Data collected in this study were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and SmartPLS. These statistical software packages were employed to analyse the independent and dependent variables and to perform frequency analysis, descriptive statistics, validity and reliability tests, correlation analysis, and regression analysis (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). This section describes the operationalisation of the variables examined in the study. The operationalisation of the variables is subsequently summarised and presented in a table.

Table 1. Likert Scale Source

Variables	Items	Scales	Sources
Organization Performance	10	Likert Scale 1-5	Koopmans et al., 2014; James B Shaw et al., 2014; Oliver et al., 2020; Valgarðsson et al., 2021
Transformational Leadership	11	Likert Scale 1-5	Jyoti et al., 2015
Ethical Practices	10	Likert Scale 1-5	Valgarðsson et al., 2021; Copeland, 2016; Saahar, 2014; González-Cabrera et al., 2020

Note: The Likert scales are as follows: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (undecided), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree).

3.2 Sample Population

According to Sekaran et al. (2016), a population is the group of individuals or elements that a researcher wants to investigate, while an element refers to an individual member of that population. The population for this study comprised 2,120 division heads and committee members in Pahang. They were selected as key informants because they could provide information on behalf of their respective organisations. As representatives of their organisations, division heads and committee members are involved in communicating organisational views and implementing relevant objectives, policies, and strategies.

3.3 Sampling Procedures

The process begins with an initial respondent who recommends other potential participants who meet the required study criteria. These referrals may continue from one participant to another, helping the researcher reach a wider group within the target population. Meanwhile, judgmental sampling, also referred to as purposive sampling, involves choosing participants judgement of their suitability and relevance to the study (Kumar et al., 2018; Sekaran et al., 2016; Amalia et al., 2025).

To make the findings widely applicable, a probability sampling design was employed. The population comprised 2,120 division heads and committee members in Pahang. Data were collected from members of three political organisations in the state: Barisan Nasional (BN), Pakatan Harapan (PH), and Perikatan Nasional (PN), with a total sample size of 327 respondents. Disproportionate stratified random sampling was used to select the respondents from the respective strata. This technique allows the number of respondents selected from each stratum to differ according to the sampling requirements, while maintaining a fixed overall sample size (Sekaran et al., 2016; Berlian et al., 2025). A total of 339 respondents participated in the study (Khan et al., 2014; Shahid et al., 2025).

3.3.1 Sample Size, Power, and Precision

According to Kumar et al. (2018) and Sekaran et al. (2016), sample is simply a practical subset of the total population selected for a research study. Sampling is necessary for several reasons. First, examining all the quantity of the population may not be feasible due to practical and resource constraints. Second, an appropriately selected sample enables the findings of the study to be generalised to the target population.

The population comprised 2,120 division heads and committee members in Pahang. Since studying the entire population across Pahang was not practically feasible, the selected a representative sample to ensure our data collection remained both manageable and accurate. This approach was consistent with the positivist research philosophy underpinning the study and was intended to facilitate the generalisation of the research findings. Therefore, according to Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table, the appropriate sample size for this study is 327.

3.3.2 Research Design

To systematically answer our research questions, this study relies on a structured research design that bridges the gap between our conceptual framework and data collection. This design brings together all the vital pieces of our methodology that clearly defining the study's purpose, the quantitative approach, the organizational setting in Pahang, the researcher's role, the timeframe, and the exact unit of analysis (Sekaran et al., 2016). For this study, a descriptive research design was selected to examine the relationships between transformational leadership, organisational performance, and ethical practices.

Second, data for this correlational study were collected through a survey method using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was administered through Google Forms and distributed to the respondents over one month. Third, the study was cross-sectional because the data were collected at a single point in time and subsequently analysed using SPSS 26 and SmartPLS. Fourth, a probability sampling technique was adopted to facilitate the generalisation of the findings, while the individual was used as the unit of analysis. Finally, the researcher maintained a minimal level of interference throughout the study.

3.3.3 Experimental Manipulations and Interventions

Establishing the validity and reliability of the survey questionnaire is an important step before data collection. Assessing these aspects helps ensure the accuracy of the measurements and strengthens the credibility of the

research findings (Saunders et al., 2000). According to Sekaran et al. (2016), content or face validity assesses whether the items appear suitable for measuring the intended concept. In this study, the items were reviewed to determine whether they appropriately represented the factors established in previous research. Factor analysis was used to simplify a large number of variables into a smaller and more understandable set of factors (Cavana et al., 2001). Reliability refers to the degree to which a measurement instrument produces consistent and stable results over time. An instrument is considered reliable when it produces similar results when the measurement is repeated under comparable conditions (Neuman, 2011). Cronbach's alpha coefficient is used to determine the reliability of a research instrument by assessing the consistency of its measurement items (Churchill, 1988). Cronbach's alpha values are used to assess the reliability of the research instrument. A high alpha value indicates that the measurement items demonstrate strong internal consistency, while a low alpha value indicates a lower level of consistency (Nunnally, 1978). Generally, a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.80 or higher is considered to indicate good reliability, whereas a coefficient of 0.70 or higher is regarded as an acceptable level of reliability (Nunnally et al., 1994). However, Hair et al. (2021) stated that an alpha value of 0.60 to less than 0.70 can still be considered acceptable and reliable for constructs with modest internal consistency.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Path Coefficient Testing

Path coefficient analysis is conducted to assess the relationships between the variables and determine whether the effects of the predictor variables on the respective constructs are statistically significant (Sarstedt et al., 2021; Rashid et al., 2022). Path coefficients are used to determine whether the data support the hypotheses by examining the beta coefficient (β), t-values, and p-values (Hair et al., 2017; Kaewsaeng et al., 2022).

Alternative models can also be compared to examine the relationships between different theoretical perspectives and research contexts. PLS-SEM enables such comparisons through regression analysis and prediction based on the study sample (Sarstedt et al., 2021). Path coefficients were evaluated via regression analysis to determine the weight and significance of the relationships among the constructs. Bootstrapping is then applied to assess the significance of the path coefficients by obtaining the t-values and p-values (Aguirre-Urreta et al., 2018). The results are considered statistically significant when the p-value is less than 0.05 and the t-value is greater than 1.96, based on a significance level of 0.05 (Rashid et al., 2022).

The path coefficient results demonstrate significant relationships between the variables. Organisational performance is significantly related to ethical practices ($\beta = 0.583$, $t = 13.808$, $p < 0.05$), while transformational leadership is significantly related to ethical practices ($\beta = 0.361$, $t = 8.863$, $p < 0.05$). Transformational leadership also demonstrates a significant effect on organisational performance ($\beta = 0.796$, $t = 34.678$, $p < 0.05$).

4.2 Discussion

The descriptive statistics show that transformational leadership had a mean score of 3.69 (SD = 0.76), followed by ethical practices with a mean of 3.75 (SD = 0.76) and organisational performance with a mean of 3.80 (SD = 0.78). Based on these mean scores, all three constructs are classified within the high category.

Table 2. Path Coefficient Result

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Values (O/STDEV)	P Values
Organization Performance -> Ethical Practices	0.583	0.582	0.042	13.808	0.000
Transformational Leadership -> Ethical Practices	0.361	0.361	0.041	8.863	0.000
Transformational Leadership -> Organization Performance	0.796	0.795	0.023	34.678	0.000

Table 3. Hypotheses Result Summary

Hypothesis	Result
H1: Transformational leadership significant effect performance in the organisation in Pahang.	Accepted
H2: Ethical practices have a significant effect on performance in the organisation.	Accepted
H3: Ethical practices moderate have the significant effect between transformational leadership and organisational performance in Pahang.	Accepted

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Recapitulations of Research Findings

Primary data were collected using a quantitative approach through a standardised questionnaire adapted and modified from previous studies. The questionnaire was evaluated to establish its validity and reliability. The responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale, 1 indicated strongly disagree, 2 indicated disagree, 3 indicated undecided, 4 indicated agree, and 5 indicated strongly agree.

5.2 Research Contribution

5.2.1 Theoretical Contribution

Theoretical contributions involve the development of innovative conceptual ideas that extend existing theories and provide a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon. According to Cloutier et al. (2020) and Hendiani et al. (2022), theoretical contributions can be developed through several approaches, including variance, model development, and formal empirical approaches. Cloutier et al. (2020) identified four styles of conceptual development: linear, parallel, recursive, and conjunctive. The linear theory-based approach follows a clearly defined sequence, where the different levels are arranged in a specific order. This approach helps researchers understand the processes through which factors may influence or predict outcomes (Cloutier et al., 2020; Van de Ven et al., 2005). For instance, Cloutier et al. (2020) examined how organisational events may generate different emotional responses, including joy, anger, and fear, thereby contributing to a better understanding of their potential effects on organisations.

5.2.2 Practical Contribution

Furthermore, practical contributions are concerned with the application of research findings in real-world settings. They highlight the extent to which research can be adapted to practical contexts and provide useful guidelines for scientific and academic practice (Lim et al., 2023). Methodology refers to the systematic approach used to conduct research and determine the appropriate methods for answering the research questions with the conceptual framework (Cloutier et al., 2020; Harvey et al., 2023).

5.2.3 Methodological Contribution

The framework extends the analysis by incorporating four specific dimensions of transformational leadership as independent variables and positioning ethical practices as a moderating variable (Idris et al., 2022). These dimensions comprise intellectual stimulation, idealised influence, individual consideration, and inspirational motivation, providing a comprehensive basis for examining the role of transformational leadership in organisational performance.

In view of the limitations identified, several recommendations are suggested for future research. All variables were measured using digitally administered, self-reported survey responses. Future researchers are therefore encouraged to allow a longer data collection period to obtain more detailed information and improve the opportunity for respondents to provide accurate answers to the questionnaire. In addition, future research may examine the relationship between organisational performance and transformational leadership using qualitative or mixed-method approaches. These approaches could provide further insights and help triangulate the quantitative findings.

The scope of future research can expand beyond Pahang to include other regions of Malaysia. Such an extension would allow transformational leadership, organisational performance, and moderating role such ethical practices to be examined across a broader organisational context. Finally, future studies could investigate other leadership styles, including delegative, authoritative, participative, and servant leadership.

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