

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

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ABSTRACT

The performance of the organisation is influenced by a number of elements, including the leadership. The performance of the organisation is a dependent variable in this study, while transactional leadership is an independent variable. In the meantime, ethical practices have a moderating influence. Additionally, the organisation in Pahang was the subject of this investigation. A total of 339 organisation leaders in Pahang is involved in the data collection process using the questionnaire by using Smart PLS version 4 and SPSS version 30 were used. The core mission of this study is three objectives: to investigate the connection between Pahang organisations' performance and transactional leadership. To investigate the impact of ethical practices on Pahang's organisational performance. To examine whether ethical practices change or strengthens the impact of transactional leadership on organizational performance in Pahang.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Even after an election, the majority of roles stay the same and are classified as non-political. The competitive service, which employs the majority of civilian workers, bases employment decisions on an impartial, open selection procedure based on merit-based criteria (Spenkuch et al., 2023). Newly elected political parties often introduce agendas, governing approaches, and policy priorities that may not fully align with existing bureaucratic structures. As a result, the transition in leadership can create administrative uncertainty, delay policy implementation, and present bureaucratic challenges to institutional change (Aghion et al., 2016; Spenkuch et al., 2023). The effectiveness of the company may be impacted by several beliefs, including information leaks and morale effects that can lower motivation and productivity (Colonnelli et al., 2020). One significant issue with transactional leadership is the application of passive management by exception, that frequently linked to poor leadership because it involves leaders who don't actively mentor and educate their followers that instead, they only step in when issues get out of hand (Purwanto et al., 2020; Berkovich et al., 2021). This strategy may fail to cultivate and assist followers, which could reduce the motivation, poorer performance, and lost chances for internal growth (Purwanto et al., 2020; Berkovich et al., 2021). When

executives only act when problems reach critical levels, they are engaging in passive management by exception. This practice frequently postpones making decisions until challenges develop, which implies a lack of teamwork (Hoxha, 2019; Jangsiriwattana et al., 2019; Purwanto et al., 2020). When unethical behavior is exhibited by a leader, especially in the political sphere, it can have serious negative consequences for the performance and credibility of the political organization they represent. Dishonesty, power abuse, and corruption are examples of unethical behavior that erodes public confidence, compromises institutional integrity, and can result in internal strife and a decline in support from constituents and followers (Ezeanyim et al., 2021). The major ethical dilemma is corruption among numerous organizations, which may affect the future leadership of Malaysia (Ahmad et al., 2017; Sulaiman et al., 2023).

1.2 Research Objectives and Significance of the Study

This study focuses on the following objectives:

1. To determine the relationship between transactional leadership and organisational performance in Pahang.
2. To determine how ethical practices, influence organisational performance in Pahang.
3. To determine whether ethical practices moderate the relationship between transactional leadership and organisational performance in Pahang.

1.3 State Hypotheses and Their Correspondence to Research Design

Critical issues that concern on relationship among transactional leadership, and organization performance, and ethics as the moderating effect have been raised. Three hypotheses:

H1: Transactional 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 transactional leadership and organisational performance in Pahang.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Organisational Performance

The performance is referred to as "an organ of performance" and is very significant. Dissecting the hand illustrates the intricacy and precision needed for correct function in medical practice. The hand is said to be a civilizing force that advances culture (Vaczi et al., 2021). Furthermore, according to the traditional theory, the right and left hands had a relationship of social stratification and inspired a highly dualistic moral universe. The "hand" is a metaphor for abilities, dexterity, strength, and control (Vaczi et al., 2021). In a similar vein, thorough performance analysis is essential to an organization's effectiveness and long-term viability. Therefore, to guaranty that the organization's future results are positive, performance is crucial (Vaczi et al., 2021).

2.2 Transactional Leadership

Contingent reward is the component of transactional leadership that focuses on the reward from the leaders to the followers. Under this approach, leaders establish specific goals and communicate the rewards that followers can expect upon achieving those goals. The reward is therefore based on the success task of the agreed objectives (Hoxha, 2019; Jangsiriwattana et al., 2019; Susanto et al., 2023). This idea of a dependent payment has a positive effect and inspires followers to achieve the organization's objective (Susanto et al., 2023). Additionally, a leader who is focused on punishment uses contingent compensation in transactional leadership categories (Hoxha, 2019). Additionally, a transactional leadership style may incorporate values like accountability, honesty, and done in return (Purwanto et al., 2020).

2.3 Ethical Practices

Conduct is a collective term for voluntary behaviors, and ethics is the normative science of conduct. People classify a variety of non-human behaviors as either excellent or bad in ordinary conversation; for example, they

talk about good wine and bad luck. The terms "good" and "bad" can have diverse meanings in common conversation. Axiology, sometimes known as the science of values, is a common term for this kind of science, which may be required to deal with values in all their diverse meanings and distinguish them from one another (Lillie, 2020).

2.4 Relationship Between Transactional Leadership and Performance of Organisation

The independent variable in this study is transactional leadership, focusing on leadership behaviours that involve interactions and exchanges between leaders and followers, particularly through contingent rewards and management by exception. The performance of organizations, which includes a variety of outcomes like follower happiness, organizational effectiveness, and the capacity to sustain a competitive position, is the dependent variable in this study. The leadership characteristics result in better organizational outcomes; this study will look at how transactional leadership affects an organisation's performance. Understanding how transactional leadership behaviors which is center on defining roles, establishing expectations, and paying followers based on performance that can successfully advance corporate goals on the conception and measurement of transactional leadership (Jacobsen et al., 2022). In addition, generally expected to enhance organisational performance by linking followers' interests to organisational goals through rewards and corrective actions. In this study, the focus is on examining whether transactional leadership contributes positively to organisational effectiveness and overall performance (Jacobsen et al., 2022). Additionally, the purpose of transactional leadership is to inspire and direct followers by providing incentives that are dependent on meeting predetermined performance goals. By providing an incentive to match individual efforts with the larger corporate goals, this reward-based system improves overall performance and productivity within the organization (Jacobsen et al., 2022). Effective transactional leadership can play an important role in enhancing followers' effort and overall performance using power, rewards, and corrective actions. This leadership style emphasises clear responsibilities, expectations, and performance standards. Leaders provide rewards when followers successfully complete assigned tasks and take corrective action when performance falls below the expected standards. In this way, followers are encouraged to meet established objectives and contribute to the overall performance of the organization (Jacobsen et al., 2022; Bo Dong, 2023).

2.5 Relationship Between Ethical Practices and Performance of Organisation

Ethical practices act as a powerful effect, fundamentally shaping how transactional leadership translates into better organizational outcomes and organisational performance by serving as a moderating variable (Faliza et al., 2024). Ethical practices refer to the standards that guide individuals within an organisation in distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. According to Ezeanyim et al. (2021) and Oyegbami et al. (2023), ethical practices are essential for maintaining organisational sustainability and achieving organisational objectives. They also influence how organisational activities are conducted and can contribute to improved performance. In this regard, organisations that promote strong ethical practices are more likely to support better organisational outcomes (Ezeanyim et al., 2021; Oyegbami et al., 2023).

2.6 Ethical Practice on Transactional Leadership and Performance of Organisation

Ethical practices are an important aspect of organisational performance, as they influence how an organisation operates and achieves its objectives. For example, Faliza et al. (2024) proposed that Islamic work ethics may moderate the direct connection between leadership styles and how effectively an organization achieves its goals. Similarly, Ezeanyim et al. (2021) study the relationship between ethical practices and organisational performance. In addition, to organisational ethics, ethical behaviour at the individual level has also been examined in previous research. Watts et al. (2017) found that the type of story presented to individuals before they completed an ethical assessment could influence their performance in certain situations. This finding suggests that the context in which ethical practices are important in shaping individual responses. The relevance of ethical practices in understanding organisational performance and role of ethics as a moderating factor.

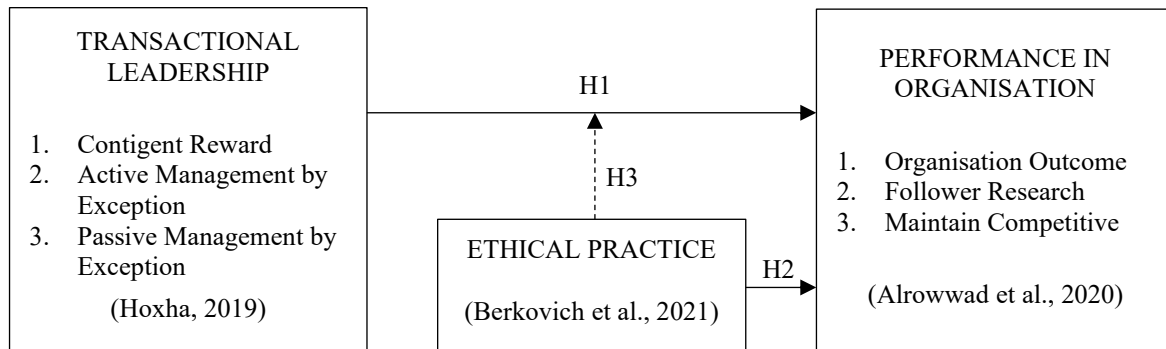


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Impact of Transactional Leadership on Organisation Performance in Pahang: Exploring the Moderating Role of Ethical Practices

It also found out that ethical considerations were a significant moderator. It's also intriguing to note that individuals who read customized stories before completing an ethical test outperformed those who read socialized stories in certain instances. Three components make up the independent variable of transactional leadership: active management by exception, passive management by exception, and contingent reward. In the meantime, the ethical practices that affect the direction or intensity of these impacts are found in the moderating section. Furthermore, the outcome of the organization, follower research, and maintaining competitiveness are the three components that make up the dependent variable of performance in organisation. Furthermore, the H1, H2, and H3, stand for hypothesis 1, hypothesis 2, and hypothesis 3:

H1: Transactional 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 transactional leadership and organisational performance in Pahang.

3. Method

3.1 Data Analysis

It also found out that ethical considerations were a significant moderator. It's also intriguing to note that individuals who read customized stories before completing an ethical test outperformed those who read socialized stories in certain instances. Both independent and dependent variables, frequency, descriptive, validity, reliability, correlation, and regression analysis are determined using it (Sekaran et al., 2016). It is also intriguing to note that individuals who read customized stories before completing an ethical test outperformed those who read socialized stories in certain instances. The operationalisation of the variables examined in this study is summarised in the table below.

Table 1. References of Variables

Variables	Items	Scales	Sources
Organization Performance	10	Likert Scale 1-5	Koopmans <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Shaw <i>et al.</i> , 2014; Oliver <i>et al.</i> , 2020; Valgarðsson <i>et al.</i> , 2021
Transactional Leadership	7	Likert Scale 1-5	Avolio <i>et al.</i> , 2001
Ethical Practices	10	Likert Scale 1-5	Valgarðsson <i>et al.</i> , 2021; Saahar, 2014; González-Cabrera <i>et al.</i> , 2020

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

3.2 Sample Population

In research, the population is the group of individuals, objects, or elements that the researcher intends to investigate (Sekaran et al., 2016). A single person of the population is an element. The 2,120 individual

committee division heads in Pahang made up the study's population. Since the organizations themselves were unable to express their opinions directly, the division heads were chosen as key informants to conduct of their organizations. Division heads also implement the main goals, policies, and strategies of their companies and act as the organization's spokespersons.

3.3 Sampling Procedures

Convenience sampling involves collecting data from members of the population who are easily accessible to the researcher. This method is often preferred because it is relatively quick, simple, and cost-effective. However, since participants are not selected randomly, the resulting sample may not fully represent the characteristics of the overall population. In contrast, quota sampling aims to ensure that specific demographic groups are adequately represented within the sample (Amalia et al., 2025). Researchers establish quotas based on relevant characteristics, such as age, gender, or ethnicity, to make sure the participants reflect the composition of the population as closely as possible. A common method for researching specialized or difficult-to-reach populations is snowball sampling (Kumar et al., 2018; Sekaran et al., 2016; Amalia et al., 2025).

To make the findings truly generalisable, a sampling design was adopted to select participants from the study population. The population consisted of 2,120 division heads and committee members in Pahang. The questionnaires were distributed to members of three political organisations in Pahang: Barisan Nasional (BN), Pakatan Harapan (PH), and Perikatan Nasional (PN), with a total sample size of 327 respondents. A disproportionate stratified random sampling technique was employed to select the respondents. Under this approach, respondents are randomly selected from each stratum. However, the number of respondents selected from each stratum may differ, depending on the sampling requirements, while the overall sample size remains fixed (Sekaran et al., 2016; Berlian et al., 2025). The 339 respondents were chosen using quantitative approaches to finish the study.

3.3.1 Sample Size, Power, and Precision

A sample refers to a subset of the population selected to represent the larger population (Kumar et al., 2018; Sekaran et al., 2016). The following factors make it necessary to collect a sample for a study.

First, researchers may face practical limitations when attempting to examine every member of the study population. Second, to generalize research findings, samples are collected. The 2,120 division heads' committee members and committee members in Pahang made up the study's population. Additionally, because of the necessity to generalize the study's findings while keeping in mind the positivist research methodology that inspired it, the entire population could not be examined. Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) table indicates that 327 is the proper sample size for this investigation.

3.3.2 Research Design

A research design provides a structured plan that outlines how data will be collected and analysed to achieve the research objectives. It typically describes the objective of the study, the research methodology, the study setting, the level of researcher involvement, the period of the study, and the level at which the data will be analysed (Sekaran et al., 2016). Considering the nature and objectives of the study, employed a descriptive research design. The approach was used to examine and describe the relationships between transactional leadership, organisational performance, and ethical practices.

Second, information for this correlational study was gathered using the survey method (questionnaire). An online questionnaire developed via Google Forms was used to collect data from the respondents, and it was sent to the responders in less than a month. Third, the study adopted a cross-sectional design because the data were collected at a single point in time and analysed using SPSS 26 and SmartPLS software. Fourth, the individual was used as the unit of analysis, while a probability sampling technique was employed to support the generalisation of the study finding. Lastly, there was very little intervention from the researcher.

3.3.3 Experimental Manipulations and Interventions

Before administering the survey, validity and reliability is important to check. This helps ensure that the instrument measures the intended variables accurately of the study findings (Saunders et al., 2000). A study's

overall accuracy or veracity is referred to as its validity. According to Sekaran et al. (2016), content and face validity establish that the survey questions look right and make sense on the surface, ensuring they truly capture the specific leadership behaviors or performance metrics being studied, at face value, to be appropriate for measuring that concept. In this study, the suitability of the measurement items was assessed based on the factors and dimensions identified in previous research to ensure that the items adequately represented the concepts being examined. A vast number of variables can be condensed into a practical, comprehensible collection of components with the use of factor analysis. (Cavana et al., 2001).

Reliability refers to the extent to which a measurement instrument consistently measures the intended concept. It indicates the stability and consistency of the measurement items over time. A reliable instrument is expected to produce similar results when the same measurement is repeated under similar conditions (Neuman, 2011). The reliability of the research instrument was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. According to Nunnally (1978), a higher alpha value indicates greater internal consistency among the measurement items, whereas a lower value suggests weaker consistency. In general, an alpha coefficient of 0.80 or above indicates good reliability, while a value of 0.70 or above is generally considered acceptable (Nunnally et al., 1994). However, Hair et al., (2011) suggested that the study's constructs should have an alpha value of 0.60 to less than 0.70 to be modest but still acceptable and reliable.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Path Coefficient Testing

Coefficient testing involves examining the relationships between variables and determining the significance of the factors that influence the variables of interest (Sarstedt et al., 2021; Rashid et al., 2022). Path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values are used to assess the significance of the relationships and determine whether the data provide support for the proposed hypotheses (Hair et al., 2017; Kaewsaeng et al., 2022).

The direct impact of the independent variables on the dependent variables must be examined to assess the data (Kaewsaeng et al., 2022). To integrate theories and contexts, most of the research must compute and evaluate various models. PLS-SEM software may make predictions based on the sample and compare options using the regression literature (Sarstedt et al., 2021). The regression analyzes and the constructions are linked by the computation of path coefficients. Next, the hypothesized relationship between the constructs determines the path coefficients' strength and significance (Hair et al., 2017; Sarstedt et al., 2021). By computing the t-values and p-values of path coefficients, the significance evaluation expands upon bootstrapping (Aguirre-Urreta et al., 2018). If the t-value is larger than 1.96, the alpha level must be set at 0.05, and the p-value is less than 0.05, the validity value is deemed significant (Rashid et al., 2022).

Organizational performance and ethical behaviors have a significant impact ($b=0.583$, $t=13.808$, $p<0.05$), as has transactional leadership ($b=0.053$, $t=1.988$, $p<0.05$). Additionally, transactional leadership has a substantial impact on the performance of the firm ($b=0.148$, $t=4.285$, $p<0.05$).

4.2 Discussion

Regarding the mean and standard deviation values, the findings indicate for ethical practices (3.75 ± 0.76), transactional leadership (3.24 ± 0.69), and organisational performance (3.80 ± 0.78). Conversely, transactional leadership is classified as mild.

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
Transactional Leadership -> Ethical Practices	0.053	0.054	0.026	1.988	0.047
Transactional Leadership -> Organization Performance	0.148	0.150	0.034	4.285	0.000

Table 3. Hypotheses Result Summary

Hypothesis	Result
H1: There is a significant effect of transactional leadership on organization performance	Accepted
H2: There is a significant effect of ethical practices on organization performance	Accepted
H3: There is no moderating effect of ethical practices on transactional leadership	Accepted

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Recapitulations of Research Findings

Primary data were collected using a quantitative approach through a structured questionnaire adopted and adapted from previous studies. Participant responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale once the survey proved valid and reliable. The responses rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), where 1 represented strongly disagree, 2 represented disagree, 3 represented undecided, 4 represented agree, and 5 represented strongly agree.

5.2 Research Contribution

5.2.1 Theoretical Contribution

Overall, this study provides empirical support for the theoretical relationships proposed in the research framework. The study examined three direct hypotheses and three moderating hypotheses. The findings contribute to the existing body of knowledge on organisational studies, particularly by providing further insight into the relationship between transactional leadership and organisational performance (Hosna et al., 2021). The findings also revealed that transactional leadership directly boosts organizational performance. This leadership style plays out through three distinct behaviors which is rewarding employees when they hit targets (contingent reward), stepping in early when problems arise (active management by exception), or intervening only when things go wrong (passive management by exception) (Purwanto et al., 2020; Wahyuni et al., 2020).

5.2.2 Practical Contribution

By focusing specifically on Pahang, this study provides local leaders and organizations with the practical insights they need to leverage transactional leadership for better organizational performance (Harvey et al., 2023). This study provides information about the variables affecting Pahang's organisations' performance, which may be helpful to state officials such as a Malaysian scene (Harvey et al., 2023). To give good practices and change into good leadership with good ethical practices, it is necessary to identify the practical contribution of current leadership and ethical practices to expand in the real world in organizational environments (Harvey et al., 2023).

5.2.3 Methodological Contribution

The study contributes by applying an integrated framework to examine how different dimensions of transactional leadership are related to organisational performance. Instead of viewing transactional leadership as a single concept, this framework breaks it down into three distinct dimensions which is contingent rewards, active management by exception, and passive management by exception. These dimensions are examined as independent variables to determine their respective relationships with organisational performance. In addition, ethical practices are incorporated as a moderating variable to examine whether they influence the relationship between transactional leadership and organisational performance (Idris et al., 2022). By bringing these variables together within a single framework, the study provides a structured approach for examining the interaction between leadership practices, ethical practices, and organisational performance (Idris et al., 2022).

In view of the limitations identified in this study, several recommendations are proposed for future research. First, this study relied on self-reported data to obtain information on the variables under investigation. Future researchers may consider allowing a longer period for data collection to obtain more comprehensive responses and gain a better understanding of the findings reported by the respondents. Second, future studies could examine the relationship between transactional leadership and organisational performance using qualitative or mixed-method approaches. The use of different research methods may provide a more comprehensive understanding of the findings and allow the results to be examined from different perspectives. Third, future research may extend the scope of the study beyond Pahang by examining transactional leadership,

organisational performance, and the moderating role of ethical practices in a broader Malaysian context. Expanding the geographical scope may provide a wider understanding of these relationships across different organisational settings. Finally, future studies could consider other leadership styles, such as delegative, authoritative, participative, and servant leadership. Including additional leadership styles would allow researchers to examine and compare their relationships with organisational performance to understanding of how different leadership approaches may influence organisational outcomes.

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