

# The Relationship between Leadership Styles and Job Satisfaction in the Malaysian Textile Industry

Ong Choon Hee<sup>1</sup>, Ng Xin Ying, Tan Owee Kowang, Goh Chin Fei, Lim Kim Yew, Tan Seng Teck, Wong Chee Hoo

**Abstract**— In Malaysia, textile industry is facing several issues such as decline in performance, shortage of new talents and challenges to retain existing employees. The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and employee job satisfaction in the textile industry in Malaysia. The leadership styles investigated in this study are transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership. In addition, the level of employee job satisfaction in this industry has also been analyzed. This research proposed a conceptual framework that links the leadership styles with employee job satisfaction. In this study, survey questionnaire was used to collect data from the target respondents and a total of 140 responses was obtained from the survey. Although the findings show that all the leadership styles were significantly associated with job satisfaction, the dominated leadership styles were transformational and transactional leadership. Employees were found moderately satisfied with their job. The research findings are useful for the top management to determine appropriate leadership style to adopt in order to improve their employee job satisfaction level.

**Index Terms**— Job satisfaction, laissez-faire leadership, textile industry, transactional leadership, transformational leadership.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The history of textile industry in Malaysia can be traced back to early 1970s, where the growth of this industry has been accelerated by export-oriented industrialization. Based on the information from Malaysian Investment Development Authority (MIDA) [1], textile industry was the 10th biggest export earner with RM13.9 billion, providing roughly 1.8 per cent of total exports under the category for manufactured products in Malaysia. However, it has dropped out of the top 10 ranking in 2018. This implies that the performance of textile industry has declined compared to other industries in Malaysia. From this viewpoint, textile industry is undoubtedly facing more and more challenges owing to competitors from all over the world that enjoy cheaper resources, lower production costs and better quality of the product. Facing with these competitive challenges, especially from developing countries such as Thailand, Indonesia, Cambodia, Vietnam, and China. It is undeniable that human resource plays an important role and is the most essential asset of this industry. One of the key survival factors of this industry is the human capital in the factory. The development of textile industry depends not only on existing employees, but also on the injection of new generation ideas, technical skills and corporate knowledge. In addition, the industry needs to continuously provide employees with on-job training and education in order to equip themselves with

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• <sup>1</sup> Corresponding Author: Ong Choon Hee, Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia. E-mail: o.choonhee@utm.my.

• Co-Authors: Ng Xin Ying, Tan Owee Kowang, Goh Chin Fei, Azman Hashim International Business School, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Johor, Malaysia. Lim Kim Yew, Tan Seng Teck, Wong Chee Hoo, Faculty of Business, Communication and Law, INTI International University, Nilai, Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia

the latest skills and knowledge. In general, employee job satisfaction is essential to enhance employee retention and improve their work efficiency [2]. The study of researchers [3] claimed that leadership styles

have a positive significant impact on employee job satisfaction. Typically, employees whose managers adopt transactional leadership styles have the highest influence on extrinsic job satisfaction whereas employees whose managers adopt transformational leadership style have the highest effect on intrinsic job satisfaction. Therefore, this study intends to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and employee job satisfaction in the textile industry by selecting transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership as the predicting variables. This study provides essential information to managers in enhancing employee job satisfaction in the Malaysian textile industry.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

### **2.1 Job Satisfaction**

The terminology of job satisfaction is used to describe the extent of the employees like (satisfy) or dislike (dissatisfy) their job. Job satisfaction implies doing a job one enjoys, performs well, and being appropriately rewarded for one's effort. This term further implies the happiness and enthusiasm with one's work [4]. Job satisfaction is a comprehensive gathering of feeling and the level of content that a person holds towards his or her job [5]; [6]. The term job satisfaction attributes to the physical and mental health of the employees, the sense of happiness and social well-being among them. Furthermore, the feeling of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in job is influenced by the relation between one's job expectation and his or her real achievement [7]. Work plays a significant role in an individual life simply because of the reason that individuals dedicate more of their time at the workplace than conducting every other single activity in their lifetime. According to researcher [8], one could discover few factors on why people work. Work provides a way of earnings, a source of conduct and motivation, a mean of social contacts, along with a sense of self-fulfillment and self-actualization. In addition, job satisfaction could be a vital facet of work too. Positive opinions with regard to a job could generally enable individuals to go through a greater satisfaction with their previous lifestyle. Besides, they could guide people to be more emotionally and substantially healthier. Work might also be a source of pleasure for an individual, and due to that reason, researchers and other individuals have emphasized that high job satisfaction ought to be obtained [9]. While based on another job satisfaction model of researchers [10], the reaction of employees are more likely to become positive towards their work if they had the sense that their job is remarkable and they are liable for their own job performance. The origin of job satisfaction is not only come from the status of the organization but also the physical, social environment, relation between superiors and co-workers, culture in the workplaces and leadership style of the management. Each of all these factors causes distinct effects on the levels of one's job satisfaction [3].

### **2.2 Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership is about stimulating the transformation in a potential employee, group, and organization [11]. A transformational leader clearly recognizes and exploits existing demands of a potential follower. In other words, the leader not only initiates the potential motives of the employees, but also motivates them to do even more than they originally thought possible. The leader sets more challenging goals to achieve higher performance among the employees [12]. In addition, transformation leaders focus on their followers' intrinsic motivation and personal development. They give their followers a vision and a sense of organizational mission. They inspire the followers with pride, respect and trust [13]. Unlike transactional leadership, transformation leadership intends to increase motivation of its followers beyond exchange values and thereby achieve a higher level of performance of the followers. Transformation leaders differ from transactional leaders in the sense that they not only recognize the needs of the followers but also try to raise their expectations from the lower level to higher level. Transformational leaders encourage followers to do more than they originally expected and more than

they thought of their potential. Transformation leadership focuses on the development of followers and meeting the objectives of the leader, group and organization [14]. Transformational leaders, unlike transactional leaders, are more likely to foster trust among their followers, which in turn may initiate a number of positive results, including increased organizational commitment, job satisfaction and motivation [15]. In the study of researcher [16], it was found that transformational leadership has a positive relationship and strongest association with job satisfaction. Another study of researchers [3] discovered that transformational oriented management style proportionately increases the level of job satisfaction among employees. Hence, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Transformational Leadership has a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction.

### **2.3 Transactional Leadership**

The relationship between a transactional leader and the followers is built and maintained via the exchange of reward and performance. This type of leader-follower relationship has no actual engagement at the workplace. The leader only expects certain work behaviors from the followers who are compensated by both monetary and non-monetary rewards [17]. The leader sets objectives and monitors the anticipated outcomes [18]. Likewise, transactional leaders believe that reward and punishment could easily motivate people. Subsequently, there are a number of transactions between leaders and the followers by explaining how tasks should be carried out and informing them of the reward and punishment accordingly. Moreover, transactional leaders are more interested in taking care of their interests and welfare of their followers [13]. Generally, transactional leaders will participate in the negotiation process by giving rewards to their subordinates in exchange for the attainment of particular aims and the on-time completion of assigned tasks. Transactional leadership can be characterized by focusing on specific goals and agreed-upon rewards which are considered to be considerably efficient. However, transformational leadership strives to cultivate subordinates' sense of pride when tasked to work with a particular supervisor, which has shown an augmentation effect to be exerted, that is to further increase the standard of productivity, satisfaction and effectiveness. Similar to transformational leadership, transactional leadership has a positive relationship with job satisfaction according to a study of researcher [16]. Likewise, transactional leadership style is found to be positively associated with employee commitment and motivation [17]. In the research of researchers [19], both transformational and transactional leadership were found to be positively related to job success and career satisfaction. Therefore, based on the above explanation, it is hypothesized that,

H2: Transactional Leadership has a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction.

### **2.4 Laissez-Faire Leadership**

Laissez-faire leadership is being construed as a type of passive leadership styles. The communication or exchange of relation between the leader and the follower is very limited [13]. A leader who adopts laissez-faire leadership gives authority and allows the followers to make decision. This type of leader has no or least involvement in works and decision-making process. Goals and guidelines of the tasks are not clearly conveyed and explained to the employees. This implies that the leader does not take full responsibilities to lead the followers [17]. Laissez-faire leadership is said to be displayed when leaders employ a non-transformational leadership style and instead become uninvolved with their subordinates and members. In other studies, laissez-faire leadership has been considered as absence of a leadership style [20]. Laissez-faire leaders make no policy or group-related decision. The leader instead delegates the goals, decision and challenges arising from the organization to the group members. Such leaders therefore have very little or no control within the group in their organization. Laissez-faire leaders thus have to trust subordinates to make appropriate decisions. In some instances, such leaders would strive to employ highly trained and reliable members into the group or organization so that they can provide proper direction to the organization. The subordinates of a laissez-faire leader must be able to solve problems, work

independently, self-monitor and produce successful end products [21]. Laissez-faire leadership has a significant impact on job satisfaction [21], and it has moderately strong and averagely negative relationship with leadership criteria. In addition, laissez-faire leadership style as observed by employees is found to be negatively related to employee commitment and employee motivation [17]. Therefore, it is hypothesized that,

H3: Laissez-faire leadership has a significant relationship with job satisfaction.

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Population and Sample**

The target population is the employees in the selected textile factories in Johor, Malaysia. Since the total target population in the selected factories ranging from managers, supervisors and executives is 218, the suggested sample size according to researchers [22] is 140. Simple random sampling method was used to draw the respondents from the population. The sampling design is based on the availability of respondents and also their willingness to participate in the research. Participation in the research activity is on voluntary basis.

#### **3.2 Measures**

The measures of job satisfaction (10 items) was adapted from researchers [23]. In this study, there are three independent variables to be measured, namely transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership. Multifactor Questionnaires were widely used in previous researches. Hence, multifactor questionnaires for the leadership styles were adapted from the study of researcher [17]. Measures for transformational leadership and transactional leadership consist of 10 items each and whereby laissez-faire leadership consists of 8 items. Likert scale was used to measure the level of agreement for all the study variables. The scale was anchored by 1 (Strongly Disagree), 2 (Disagree), 3 (Neutral), 4 (Agree) and 5 (Strongly Agree).

#### **3.3 Data Collection Procedure**

Online and self-administered questionnaire were used for data collection. The researcher used combination of these two methods to increase the response rate. The questionnaire was prepared in bilingual (English and Mandarin) to best convey the content to the respondents of different races and education backgrounds. It is believed that it could enhance the accuracy of data collected and produce accurate results. In this study, factor analysis, reliability test, correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were employed for data analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used to analyze the data obtained.

## **IV. 4 RESULTS**

#### **4.1 Profile of the Respondents**

This study was conducted in the selected textile factories in Malaysia. A total of 140 employees participated in the study, which consists of 39 males (27.9%) and 101 females (72.1%). Most of the respondents were officers (60%), and majority of the respondents were aged between 24 to 38 years old (50.7%). In terms of academic qualifications, 55 (52.2%) respondents are bachelor's degree holders, follow by 39 and 23 of the respondents are secondary school leavers and diploma holders. 14 of the respondents (10%) are master degree holder and only 4 of them possess a doctoral degree. Majority of the participants (50.7%) fall in the category of 1-5 years of length of service, follow by 31 respondents (22.1%) with 6-10 years of work experience.

#### 4.2 Factor Analysis

The results from 140 respondents were carefully analyzed and output results were described in this section. Factor Analysis was conducted by employing Principal Component Analysis (PCA) to assess validity of the study variables. The construct validity was tested using Bartlett's Test of Sphericity and KMO/MSA values indicated the strength among the variables. Table I and Table II illustrated the results of the factor analysis. The results indicated that the value of Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin for Measuring of Sampling Adequacy (KMO/MSA) was 0.865 for the independent variables and 0.884 for dependent variable, job satisfaction. According to researchers [24], values of KMO/MSA between 0.7 and 0.8 are good for factor analysis. Next, the Bartlett's test of Sphericity was found statistically significant at  $p < 0.001$  and thus supported the factorability of the correlation matrix. Principal component analysis revealed that there were 3 factors with strong loadings. Factor 1 was labelled as transactional leadership (5 items), Factor 2 was named as laissez faire leadership (5 items) and Factor 3 was identified as transformational leadership (4 items). Based on the Factor Analysis results in Table I, transactional leadership, laissez faire leadership and transformational leadership have contributed 41.584%, 23.678% and 9.044% of the common variance respectively with Eigenvalues of 5.822, 3.315 and 1.266. The three factors cumulatively captured 74.306% of the variance. The factor loading values of the scale were in the range of 0.526 to 0.913.

TABLE I. FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES

Item	Description	Factor Loading		
		1	2	3
TF1	My leader goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group.			0.769
TF2	My leader makes others feel good to be around him/her.			0.791
TF3	I have complete faith in our leader.			0.774
TF5	My leader considers moral and ethical consequences of decisions.			0.756
TS1	My leader clarifies what one can expect when KPI is achieved.	0.912		
TS2	My leader tells us what to do to be rewarded for work.	0.909		
TS3	My leader provide recognition/rewards when achieving goals.	0.897		
TS4	My leader highlights what one could get for what they accomplish.	0.913		
TS10	My leader discusses in specific terms on who is responsible in achieving performance targets.	0.768		
LF3	My leader believes that if something is functioning properly, it is better to just leave it alone and not make any changes that could potentially break it.		0.526	
LF5	My leader avoids getting involved when important issues		0.833	

	happen.			
LF6	My leader is absent when you need him or her.		0.823	
LF7	My leader avoids making decisions.		0.891	
LF8	My leader delays responding to urgent questions.		0.839	
Eigenvalue		5.822	3.315	1.266
Percentage of Variance Explained (%)		41.584	23.678	9.044
Cumulative Percentage (%)		41.584	65.262	74.306
Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach Alpha)		0.954	0.855	0.858

Note: KMO = 0.865, Bartlett's test of Sphericity; Approx.Chi-Square = 1546.445,  $p < 0.001$ .

Table II shows a scale factor of job satisfaction that consists of 9 items. Principal component analysis extracted 9 items and one item has been discarded due to cross loading. Percentage of variance explained for the items is 61.112, as indicated in the table. Factors which have eigenvalues higher than 1 are considered significant. If the eigenvalues are lesser than 1.0, it indicates that the factor explains less information than a single item would have explained. In Table I and Table II, all the eigenvalues are greater than one. Both tables were having factor loadings with 0.50 or higher and they have greatest importance in factor analysis. Therefore, it can be concluded that validity of the measurement scales used in this study has been confirmed by the statistical results shown in Table I and Table II.

TABLE II. FACTOR ANALYSIS FOR JOB SATISFACTION

Item	Description	Factor Loading
		1
JS1	Overall, I feel I am satisfied with my job.	0.784
JS2	I am generally satisfied with the kind of work I do in this job.	0.846
JS3	I am satisfied with objectives and goals I have to achieve.	0.741
JS4	I have good relations with my superiors.	0.774
JS5	I am satisfied with the way my superiors supervise my work.	0.831
JS6	I am satisfied with the way my superiors judge my work.	0.827
JS7	I have the chance to do things I enjoy in my job.	0.806
JS8	I am satisfied with physical environment and the space I have in my workplace.	0.754
JS10	I am satisfied with the training opportunities offered by my organization.	0.655
Eigenvalue		5.500
Percentage of Variance Explained (%)		61.112
Cumulative Percentage (%)		61.112
Reliability Coefficient (Cronbach Alpha)		0.918

Note: KMO = 0.884, Bartlett's test of Sphericity; Approx.Chi-Square = 882.749,  $p < 0.001$ .

### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

Pearson correlation analysis was employed to examine the correlation between job satisfaction and the independent variables. The results tabulated in Table III show that transactional leadership ( $r=0.557$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) has the strongest correlation

with job satisfaction, followed by transformational leadership ( $r=0.467$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Laissez-faire leadership ( $r=0.094$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) was found to have no correlation with job satisfaction.

TABLE III. CORRELATION BETWEEN THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND JOB SATISFACTION

	(TF)	(TS)	(LF)	(JS)
Transformational Leadership (TF)	1			
Transactional Leadership (TS)	0.568**	1		
Laissez-Faire Leadership (LF)	-0.288**	-0.41	1	
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.467**	0.557**	0.094	1

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### 4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

Table IV shows the multiple linear regression analysis among leadership styles and job satisfaction. The results indicate that 37.8 percent ( $R^2=0.3783$ ) of the variance of job satisfaction can be explained by the three leadership styles. The analysis shows that all leadership styles have a significant positive relationship with job satisfaction. Transactional leadership ( $\beta=0.394$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) has the strongest relationship with job satisfaction, followed by transformational leadership ( $\beta=0.300$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and laissez-faire leadership ( $\beta=0.197$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Therefore, hypothesis H1, H2 and H3 are accepted.

TABLE IV. MULTIPLE REGRESSION ANALYSIS FOR THE INDEPENDENT VARIABLES AND JOB SATISFACTION

Independent Variables	Job Satisfaction				H	Result
	Beta, $\beta$	Sig.	B	Std. Error		
Transformational Leadership (TF)	0.300***	0.001	0.224	0.065	H1	Accepted
Transactional Leadership (TS)	0.394***	0.000	0.235	0.050	H2	Accepted
Laissez-Faire Leadership (LF)	0.197**	0.007	0.147	0.053	H3	Accepted
F value	27.555					
R Square	0.378					

\*\*\*Significant at the 0.001 level, \*\*Significant at the 0.01 level.

## 5 DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that the level of job satisfaction among the employees of the selected textile companies was at the moderate level ( $M = 3.5444$ ,  $SD = 0.6712$ ). There is still room to increase the level of job satisfaction. Among the leadership styles that have been selected to test their influence on job satisfaction are transformational leadership, transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership. Transactional leadership ( $\beta=0.394$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) was found to have greatest statistical influence on job satisfaction. This finding is consistent with the findings of researcher [16] and researchers [19]. As compared to transformational leadership, transactional leadership gives greater job satisfaction and

organizational identification to their followers [19]. On the same note, Researchers [14] explained that transactional leadership has strong positive effect on job satisfaction and increases the employees' commitment to stay. Therefore, management should pay more attention to the needs and demands of the employees in terms of extrinsic motivation such as tangible rewards and financial incentives. On the other hand, it was found that transformational leadership ( $\beta=0.300$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) is positively associated with job satisfaction. This is in line with the studies of researchers [25], [26] and [27] stated that transformational leadership is significantly linked with job satisfaction in various sectors. In addition, researchers [25] gave evident explanations that all the dimensions of transformational leadership (i.e. inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individual consideration and idealized influence) were positively related to job satisfaction. Hence, management should consider to adopt transformational leadership to raise the extent of motivation of the employees beyond exchange values so that they could reach a better level of performance and self-actualization [14]. Nevertheless, in this study, laissez-faire leadership ( $\beta=0.197$ ,  $p<0.01$ ) was discovered to be positively associated with job satisfaction. This finding is relatively scarce as previous literature has associated laissez-faire leadership with negative outcomes of job satisfaction which is at the opposite end of transformational and transactional leadership [28]. However, the plausible reason to explain this finding is that non-involvement of a leader allows subordinates to be free from control pressure and thus possessing freedom to have some control to enhance self-efficacy in handling challenges [29]. Laissez-faire leadership may result in low dependency, high self-determination and autonomous motivation of subordinates [30]. Therefore, at times, leaders should strive to balance between involvement and non-involvement towards subordinates in allowing them to have more sense of autonomy and self-controls [30].

## 6 LIMITATION AND FUTURE STUDY

There are some limitations associated with this study. The focus of this study was solely on selected textile factories in the southern region in Malaysia. Therefore, the results may not able to generalize for the entire textile industry in the country. In future, researchers may consider to broaden the research scope to cover textile companies which were located in other states. Nevertheless, in this study, the study variables of leadership styles were limited to transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership. Future researchers should consider to include more leadership styles such as servant leadership, charismatic leadership and authentic leadership to be tested with job satisfaction.

## V. CONCLUSION

This study has successfully identified significant leadership styles that influenced job satisfaction among employees in the textile industry in Malaysia. The findings of this study provide empirical evidence to the management to adopt the most effective leadership style to increase job satisfaction among employees in the factory. Leaders in the textile organizations may consider to alter or adjust their leadership style to suit to the needs and demands of the organization and work climate. This study is helpful in increasing job satisfaction, organizational performance and reducing turnover rate.

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