

# Mediator Effect between Leadership Style and Organizational Effectiveness of Employee Commitment: A Malaysian Perspective

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**Abstract—** Past research has mostly focused on the impact of leadership style on organizational effectiveness. However, the role of employee commitment such as absenteeism, turnover or discipline problem as a mediator has been neglected. Thus, the objective of this study is (i) to determine the relationship between the transformational and transactional leadership style and the organizational effectiveness, and (ii) to identify the effect of employee commitment as a mediator, either as partial or full mediator in the relationship between the leaders' behaviours. A total of 130 public service officers were selected based on purposive sampling to participate in a survey. The instruments used were the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to measure the respondents' perceptions towards the transformational and transactional leadership style, a Three-Component Model of Employee Commitment to measure the employees' commitment, and Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness to measure the organizational effectiveness. Frequency distribution and percentages to describe the respondents' demographics were analysed using descriptive statistics while the relationship between the transformational and transactional leadership style and the organizational effectiveness were analysed using Pearson Correlation and Multiple Regression. To determine the effect of employee commitment as a mediator, three regression equations based on Baron and Kenny model were run through Multiple Regression Analyses. The results revealed that employee commitment was found to have a partial mediator effect in the relationship between leadership style and effectiveness of the organization. This study provided some insights on the importance of leadership style and the effect of employee commitment to enhance the effectiveness of an organization.

**Index Terms—** employee commitment, leadership style, mediator effect, organization effectiveness.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Leadership aspects are very closely related to the context of how it is practised, not only in the context of the importance of leaders' background factors, personality and skills but also the impact and influence of leadership on organisational performance and employee commitment. Therefore, the key focus of leadership theory is to see the impact of the leadership of the organization's environment, especially against followers' commitment and the success of the organisation itself

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(YUKL, 1999).

### *1.1 Research background*

The impact of globalization and transformation in the industry has resulted in a change in the system and the structure of the organization whether at the public service level. There was also a change in the context of the employee, where Van Wart (1993) and Madinah et al. (2008) explained that there is a need to be transformed in the leadership context. Leadership in the organization is an important aspect to be given attention. This is because leadership is an integral part of the organization's direction in ensuring an organizational continuity and capability to continuously survive in the current market.

According to Al Hamadi et al.. (2019). good leadership will impact the satisfaction of employees' work. In the context Address for correspondence: Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia, 86400, Parit Raja, Batu Pahat, Johor, nesa@uthm.edu.my  
good commitment (Van Wart, 1996 and Nazatul Shima et al. 2008) and to give impact of organizational performance. This move gives an image to the national administration system leadership in the public service sector and also determines the development and achievement of a country.

According to Blau (1985), leadership style of the leaders have a very strong influence in the aspect of increased or declining employee commitment towards organizations while employee commitment is also required to ensure that organizational goals are achieved in line with the commitments itself as one of the mechanisms in the success measurement of an organization (Nik Mutasim and Nordin, 2001). Due to that, Bass (1985) believes that leaders must use a leadership style that suits the needs of the employees so that the leadership is able to influence the value, attitude, motivation, perception, role, and commitment of employees. In fact, the performance and effectiveness of the organization itself become very important factors to determine the success of the organization. In line with that, Burn (1978), Bass (1985), Van Wart (1996) and Tucci (2008) saw the transformational and transactional leadership style as one of the most appropriate leadership styles to be practised by the organization leaders today as both the leadership style can influence the follower to change towards a better direction besides increasing the motivation of followers in producing tasks with distinction. This study agrees with Burns (1978), Bass (1985) and Van Wart (1996) that motivated employees will do a better job and thus, the results will indirectly affect the performance of organization's success.

### *1.2 Problem statement*

Most of the past research focuses on the impact and influence of leadership styles on organizational performance (Olanrewaju, 2009 and Azman et al. 2010) because leadership styles are the main foundations in mobilizing organizations to achieve their goals and increase the effectiveness of an organization (Rowe et al, 2005 in Feng Jing). Some researchers also believe that leadership styles can affect the organizational performance directly and indirectly (Gholamreza et al. 2009). This means that leaders need other mechanisms as intermediaries in the relationship between leadership style and organizational effectiveness (Steyrer et al. 2008).

Although leadership style leaders are said to have relationships with organizational effectiveness (Christopher et al. 2001; Chin Hsein et al. 2002; Angelo et al. 2004) but employee commitment is also perceived as one of them that can affect the effectiveness of the organization (Bello, 2003). Employee commitment is individual behaviour that is based on a trust in organizational value and objectives (Porter et al. 1979) apart from also referring to the loyal value and staff

readiness to remain in the organization (Putterill and Rohrer, 1995). According to Ghemawat (1991), employee commitment is one of the formulas for the success of an organization. Employees who are committed to the organization will have a positive impact such as organizational performance improvement behaviour (Azman et al, 2010 and Prorus (O'Reilly and chat1986) while employees who do not provide commitment to the organization will have a negative impact such as skipping work (Angle and Perry, 1986), public complaint receipts, absenteeism and so on.

This study also tries to bridge the gap that is still large in literature studies on the impact of employee commitment in the relationship between leadership style and efficacy of organization (Feng Jing and Avery, 2008) in the context of organizations in Malaysia. This study differs with most previous studies where it tries to determine the relationships and investigate the impact of leadership styles on individual factors such as employee commitment (Jean, 2004), work performance (Azman et al. 2010), job satisfaction (Chong Ming Yang, 2004), turn work-out (Mowday et al. 1982) and workmen's absence on duty (Guest, 1991 and Baharuddin, 2004). However, the study tries to determine the relationship between leader's leadership style with the organization's factor itself by focusing on features that reflect the measurement of an organization's effectiveness. In addition, this study is important because researchers are trying to make employee commitment as an intermediary (mediator factor) in the relationship between leader's leadership style and organizational effectiveness where the researchers try to determine if leadership style is the head that can influence employee commitment and ultimately the commitment of the employee can impact the effectiveness of the organization as a result of the influence of leadership behaviour. This study is unlike the previous study, which only put a factor of employee commitment as contributors (independent variables) and effects (lean variables) from a variable in a single study.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Apart from impacting the performance of the organization (Al Hammadi et al., 2019), leadership style is also one of the important factors in determining employee commitment (Ramchandran and Krishnan, 2009). Commitment is the attitude and conduct of employees who are very important in determining the level of achievement of a goal. Reilley and Chatman (1986), saw commitment as a degree of feelings belonging to and committed individuals with the organization where they worked. For Ghemawat (1991), employee commitment is one of the formulas for the success of an organization while Porter et al. (1979) defines the commitment of employees as individual behaviour based on a belief in the value and organizational goals. Employees who commit will normally endeavour to improve the performance of the organization as well as continue to remain in the existing organization. The opinion of Porter et al. (1979) is supported by Putterill and Rohrer (1995) who refer to employee commitment as a desire for an employee to continue to remain in the organization where they will endeavour to be passionate and can receive organizational goals. The commitment to the organization is regarded as one of the very important factors in various organizations (Tabassum et al. 2009) because employee commitment is found to have significant relationship in determining organizational performance (Ricketta, 2002) and the effectiveness of organizations (Laschinger, 2001; Steyrer et al. 2008).

Employee commitment has an impact on the effectiveness of the organization (Steyrer at al., 2008), work performance, work turnover (Mowday et al., 1982) and prosocial behaviour (O'Reilly and Chatman, 1986). According to Meyer and Allen (1991 and 1997) employee commitment refers to the needs of employees to work as well as desires to continue working in the organization for some reason. Commitment can also be referred as employee loyalty to remain in the organization, the worries about the threat to the organization including assuming that the success and effectiveness of the

organization.

The study of Azman et al. (2010) indicates that employee work performance and organizational performance are measured based on the extent of commitment shown by employees. This means, if the commitment shows workers are at a high level, the performance of employees is also high and the performance of the organization has also shown improvement. Chiun Lo et al. (2009) found that the dimensions of intellectual stimulation, an ideal influence and charisma in leadership has a positive relationship with the commitment of the workers and the employees while the dimension of intellectual stimulation and consideration individuals have a positive relationship with continuous commitment. These findings showed that different dimensions of leadership styles would have different effects on the specific dimensions of employee commitment. The dimension of different commitments will also affect the effectiveness of the organization, whether the employee is only working to obtain a source of income to continue life or due to a sense of the organization.

The results of the Trottier et al. (2008) demonstrate the transformation leadership style and transactional leadership style are very important in creating employee work satisfaction in the organization. This is because employees who are satisfied with the work will continue to strive to provide the best commitment to performing their tasks and thus, increase the satisfaction level of their work in future. This situation shows that the higher the satisfaction of the employees' work, the higher the commitment given by employees and the higher the performance of the organization can be achieved (Azman et al. 2010). Wang et al. (2011) also pointed out that the leadership style of the behaviour structure has a relationship with the attitude and commitment of the employee and this relationship will further affect the performance of the organization. The finding of Money et al. (2011) indicates that the commitment of workers can affect the effectiveness of the organization because employees are perceived as intermediaries who reacts after receiving instructions and answers to suggestions.

Feng Jing and Avery (2008) also suggested that they conducted a study to determine whether the element found to be significant and desirable to be placed as a direct relationship between the leadership style and the effectiveness of the organization. This is because according to Feng Jing and Avery (2008), in determining the relationship between leadership style and organization effectiveness, there is still a free space that needs to be filled to facilitate the effectiveness of the organization. In this context, Feng Jing and Avery (2008) are trying to see if an employee commitment can become a mediator in the relationship because employee commitment is believed to have a relationship with the effectiveness of the organization (Adhikari and Gautam, 2011).

### **III. METHODOLOGY**

This study involved 130 public service officers at organization. They were selected based on purposive sampling to participate in a survey. The instruments used were the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire to measure the transformational and transactional leadership style, a Three-Component Model of Employee Commitment to measure the employees' commitment, and Index of Perceived Organizational Effectiveness to measure the organizational effectiveness. Respondents' demographics were analysed using descriptive statistics while the relationship between the transformational and transactional leadership style and the organizational effectiveness were analysed using Pearson Correlation. To determine the effect of employee commitment as a mediator, three regression equations based on Baron and Kenny model were run through Multiple Regression Analyses.

## IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Demographic

The study involved a total of 68 female officers (52.3%) and 62 male officers (47.7%). This finding reflects the population of the research organization that has no significant difference between male and female officers. Most of the respondents (46.2%) have worked in the organization for a period between one and five years while 32.3% of the respondents were preaching for a period of 11 years and above.

The findings show that the mean value of transformational leadership styles is 3.32 with a standard deviation value of 1.09. This demonstrates the leadership style of the transformational leadership style have a moderate score with a small value. Meanwhile, the mean value of the transactional leadership style is 3.03 with a standard deviation value of 1.07. The findings show that the respondent's perception of transactional leadership style is moderate as well. Table 1 shows the mean and standard deviation value for the transformational and transactional leadership style of respondents.

Table 1: Mean Value and Standard Deviation of Leadership Style

Variable	N (130)	
	mean	Std deviation
Transformational Style	3.32	1.09
Transactional Style	3.03	1.07

### 4.2 To determine the relationship between Transformational and Transactional leadership style and organizational effectiveness

Table 2 shows the results of correlation analysis between leadership style and effectiveness of the organization. The findings showed that there was a modest relationship between the transformational leadership style with the effectiveness of the organization A ( $r = 0.455$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This finding is in line with Roger (2008), Olanrewaju (2009) and Rukmani et al. (2010) which stated that the style of transformational leadership has a direct and positive relationship with the performance and effectiveness of the organization. Although there are various findings (Olanrewaju, 2009; Gholamreza et al. 2009; Rukmani et al. 2010; and Muijs, 2011) which indicated the level of correlation between the transformational leadership and the effectiveness of the organization, the transformational style has the relationship and correlation at different levels against variables. This finding managed to support the opinion of MacKenzie et al. (2001) confirming that the transformational leadership style has a direct impact with the organizational performance with the dimensions of leadership lead to change the follower attitude towards a more positive direction.

The findings also showed a slight relationship with the low correlation value among the leaders' style practice with the effectiveness of the organization ( $r = 0.407$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ). This finding managed to support Van Wart (1996) which states that almost leaders in the public organizations practiced traditional leadership styles. Gill (1998) states that Malaysian leaders are more autocratic than compromising and have more dominating leadership characteristics of the transactions. However, the findings of this study also managed to support Rukmini et al. (2010) which states that the low correlation value between the relationships of leadership style with the effectiveness of the organization showed a leadership style of

transactional practiced by organizational leaders is not very strong in association with the efficacy of the organisation. According to Schein (1992 and 2003) and Feng Ying (2008), leadership styles are found to be required in the leadership of an organization but, it must depend on situations and requirements of the current conditions.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis between Leadership Style and the Effectiveness of the Organization

Variable	Correlation value (r)	Significant level (p)	Relationship value
<b>Leadership style</b>	<b>Organizational effectiveness</b>		
Transformational Leadership	0.455**	0.000	Modest relationship
Transactional Leadership	0.407**	0.000	Low relationship

*4.3 To identify the effect of employee commitment as a mediator, either as a partial or full mediator in the relationship between the leaders' behaviors.*

Based on Baron and Kenny (1986) Model, employee commitment was found to have a partial mediator effect in the relationship between leadership style and effectiveness of the organization. The specific explanation will be explained in Table 3 and Table 4 below.

Table 3: Impact of Employee Commitment on the Relationships between Transformational Leadership Style and the Organizational Effectiveness

Testing step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	β	Significant
Step 1 X = Transformational Style Y = Organizational Effectiveness	.455	.207		.455	.000
Step 2 X = Transformational Style Y = Employee Commitment	.176	.031		.176	.000
Step 3	.423	.179		.423	.000

X = Employee Commitment	.423	.179			.000
Y = Organizational Effectiveness	.573	.329	.150		.000
Block 1 = Employee Commitment				.354	
Block 2 = Transformational Style				.394	

Table 3 shows four steps to test the impact of employee commitment on the relationships between transformational leadership style and the organizational effectiveness. The first step of the regression equation indicates there is a significant relationship between the transformational style and the effectiveness of the organization with beta value. 455 While the second step indicates there is a significant relationship between the transformational style and employee commitment ( $\beta = .176$ ). The third step also shows that a significant relationship between employee commitment and organizational effectiveness and in the fourth step, the regression equation reflects the factors of employee commitment affecting the relationship between the transformational leadership style and organizational effectiveness with beta value 394 ( $p = 0.000$ ). Therefore, it is concluded that an employee commitment factor can only provide some effects or partially mediates the relationship between the transformational leadership style and organizational effectiveness ( $P < 0.05$ ).

The findings of this study further managed to support the finding Steyrer et al. (2008), Wang et al. (2011), Patulak et al., (2013) and Awan et al., (2014) showing that the elements of the follower's commitment can be mediator in a leadership style relationship with the efficacy of organization. Supporting the findings of this study Meyer and Allen (1990) viewed that the high follower of his commitment and normative will normally remain in the organization for their desire to continue to give up to the organization other than feeling the need to do so. Despite that, the finding of Barling et al. (1996) demonstrated a transformational leadership style to have more impact to the commitment of the employee. Chong Ming Yang (2003) is of the view that both the leadership styles of transformation and transactions affect employee commitment. Meanwhile employee commitment is one of the indicators that can be used to gauge the performance of an organization (Azman et al. 2010)

Table 4: Impact of employee commitment on the relationship between Transactional leadership style and the organizational effectiveness

Testing step	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	$\beta$	Significant
Step 1 X = Transactional Style Y = Organizational Effectiveness	.407	.166		.407	.000
Step 2 X = Transactional Style	.292	.085		.292	.000

Y = Employee Commitment					
Step 3	.423	.179		.423	.000
X = Employee Commitment	.423	.179			.000
Y = Organizational Effectiveness	.517	.267	.089		.000
Block 1 = Employee Commitment				.332	
Block 2 = Transactional Style				.311	

Table 4 shows four steps to test the impact of employee commitment on the relationship between Transactional leadership style and the organizational effectiveness. The first step of the regression equation indicates there is a significant relationship between the transactional leadership style and the effectiveness of the organization with beta value .407, while the second step indicates there is a significant relationship between the transactional leadership style and employee commitment with the Beta value is .292. The third step also shows that a significant relationship between employee commitment and organizational effectiveness and in the fourth step, the regression equation reflects the factors of employee commitment affecting the relationship between the transactional leadership style and organizational effectiveness with beta value is .311 ( $p = 0.000$ ). Therefore, it is concluded that an employee commitment factor only gives some effects or partially mediates the relationship between the transactional leadership style and the organizational effectiveness ( $P < 0.05$ ).

This finding is in line with the Steyrer et al. (2008) and Wang et al. (2011) which also stated that the element of the follower commitment is a mediator in a relationship between the leadership style and the effectiveness of the organization. Meanwhile, Money et al. (2011) added that the task-oriented element was found to have a direct relationship with the performance achievement of the organization as the follower would be rewarded from the task being executed. Supporting this finding, Marmaya et al. (2011) agree that the transactional leadership style is found to be higher in correlation value with employee commitment rather than the transformational leadership style.

## V. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is said that both the leadership style of transformational and the transactional leadership style have a relationship with the effectiveness of the organization even at the medium and low correlation level. The employee commitment is only able to give a part (partially mediates) as a mediator on the relationship between the transformational and the transactional style with the effectiveness of the organization. However, the impact of the employee commitment as a mediator on the relationship between transformational of leadership styles is found to be higher than its role in the relationship between the transactional leadership style and the effectiveness of the organization. The findings of this study subsequently managed to fill the gap. Feng Jing and Avery (2008) assume that it would have to be other factors as a mediator in relationships between leadership styles and organization effectiveness. According to Feng Jing and Avery (2008), there should have been another factor that connects the leadership style and the effectiveness of the organization because leadership style alone does not have a direct and full impact on the effectiveness of the organization.



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