

# THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON THE EMPLOYEES' MOTIVATION IN THE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES IN KEDAH, MALAYSIA

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**Abstract:** *Employees' job satisfaction and performance depends on the style of leadership among their leaders. The purpose of this study is to identify the relationship between the leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) and the employees' motivation. This quantitative research was conducted through a questionnaire survey with 179 respondents that work in the government agencies in Kedah. The result shows that only transformational leadership styles significantly influence the employee motivation. The transactional leadership styles and laissez-faire leadership styles have not influenced the employee motivation in government agencies that are being studied. The findings indicate that the leadership style have direct affect with employee's motivation. As a conclusion, the leaders in government agencies should adopt the transformational leadership style to motivate the employees. However, further research should be conducted on more government agencies in Malaysia to confirm these findings.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership Styles, Employees Motivation, Government Agencies*

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## Introduction

In every organization, employee is an important asset to the company to get the job done. Having a good strategy to get the employees motivated every day, will produce more productive employees and reduce the dissatisfaction and demotivation such as absenteeism (Varma, 2019). According to Osabiya (2015), employee motivation is the level of energy, commitment, and creativity that the company's worker brings to their job. The greatest challenge for a company is when they have high turnover rates which will cause a hassle to conduct new interview and adjustment of new salary to recruit new employees. Islam and Zaki Hj Ismail (2008) claimed that finding a way to motivate employees to work at higher level activity is a challenge especially in rapidly emerging government-controlled industry. The traditional ways of ensuring the employees get motivated is by giving them the jobs that are equal to their salary and reward. Another way of ensuring the employees to become motivated is by having a good leader in the company. Gichure (2014) claimed that the most important factors that influence the employees is the leadership. A style of a leader describes by how they manage the situation in an organizational setting (Walker, 2015). To create employee's job satisfaction is not easy. It can only be created if there is connection between work, motivation, leadership, and organizational culture of the company.

Public sectors or government agencies in Malaysia are people who earn high wages (Menon, 2017). Government sectors are governed by the Malaysian laws that will need to reach the government objectives; thus, they need to implement the duties and responsibilities that had been appointed for them. Therefore, employees who work under government agencies need to be highly motivated to ensure that the quality of the work are beyond expectations. The study on leadership styles influence on public sector employees' motivation in Malaysia is still scarce, although there are a few studies on leadership style on job satisfaction or employee performance of public sector employees in Malaysia (Voon, Lo, Ngui & Ayob, 2011; Aminah Ahmad, 2020). Thus, there is a need to study the influence of leadership styles on the public sectors employees' motivation in Malaysia.

Hence, this study is to investigate the influence of leadership styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) on employee motivation in the government agencies in Malaysia or more specific in Kedah, Malaysia. The study will also determine which leadership styles have most influenced on employee motivation in the government agencies.

## Research Objective

The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of leadership styles on employee motivation in government agencies. The specific research objectives are:

- i. To study the influence of transformational leadership style on employee motivation in government agencies.
- ii. To study the influence of transactional leadership style on employee motivation in government agencies.
- iii. To study the influence of laissez-faire leadership style on employee motivation in government agencies
- iv. To study which of the leadership styles that has most influence on employee motivation in government agencies.

## Literature Review

### Employees' Motivation

Motivation is defined as the desire to achieve a goal or a certain performance level (Bauer & Erdogan, 2009). It is a process that guides, maintains, and controls behaviour. It plays a crucial role in the work environment. It is widely believed that motivated employees produce higher results and lead to successfully completed projects and tasks. Motivation management is a key stage in the success of any business model, increases the productivity of the organization and can achieve higher results. Motivated employees also maintain a high level of innovative thinking and their work will be more efficient (Lazarova, 2021).

In any organization, when it involves the employees, automatically it involves Human Resource. Therefore, motivations among the employees in organizations come from variety of reasons and it will put human resource into action (Omar, 2021). Human resource will need to fully utilize the employee's skills, talents, and productivity. To achieve these, the gap between the employee's ability and the employee's willingness needs to be filled. According to Kumar and Garg (2011), effective Human Resource Management (HRM) system could be a great reason of keeping the high morale among employees. It is not possible for the employees to get motivated without any push factor to improve their job performance. It is difficult for any departments to motivate and satisfy the employees without any support from senior management participation and interest (Solanki, 2013). Organizations will need to play an important role to encourage the employee's motivations, thus will also need help from the leadership skills at different levels. According to Herman et al. (2011), employees from any level can have different leadership skills if given the opportunities, which will help to motivates other employees.

Other factors that cause employees become demotivated are the feeling of under-valued. This is when the employees hard work is not being recognized by the leaders or organizations. When the employees feeling demotivated, their productivity and job performance will decrease. According to Michale (2016), employees that feels their efforts are not being appreciated, they will soon begin to have lack of energy and commitment in their role. According to Brown (2014), employee job satisfaction is a collage that bridges between the role of reward for work involvement. However, other factors that gives strong impact on the employee motivation is leadership. According to Gopal, Rima and Chowdhury (2014), leadership is an important determinant of motivation. Employees that are less motivated begin to have less respect on the organization's leader and will put less effort on achieving the company goals.

As we reach to digital transformation, many companies have developed technological skills in the employee's job scope. Leaders nowadays, not only play important role to motivates their employees, but also need to ensure that their employees have the technological skills, hence it could increase their job performance in developing new skills. According to Oldham and Cummings (1996), the leadership is one of the significant factors that affect the employee's creativity and organizational innovations. Industries that are driven by the digital media are rapidly growing (Chowdhury, 2014). As stated by Akerblom (2016), the trend of technological advance is eventually changed the operations of the management and organizations, therefore, those from the younger generations are facing more challenges as the organizations expected them to already have these skills.

### **Transformational Leadership**

According to Gill, Fitzgerald, Bhutani, Mand, and Sharma (2010), transformational leadership can be defined as the process of influencing major changes in the attitudes and assumptions of organizations member and building commitment for the organization's mission or objectives. Transformational leadership style is significant in affecting the employee's creativity (Shin & Zhou, 2003). For the last two decades, transformational leadership is one of the approaches that attracted many researchers in leadership theories (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). According to Shafi, Zoya, Lei, Song and Sarker (2020), transformational leadership positively affect the organizational innovation. The study also concluded that transformational leadership gave inspirational motivation to encourage employee's creativity.

Transformational leadership has four components which are: (i) idealized influence or charisma, (ii) inspirational motivation to enhance confidence, (iii) intellectual stimulation, and (iv) individualized consideration (Wren, 2018). Leaders with charisma will have the ability to persuade others (Bass, 2003). Inspirational motivation is where the leader deals with emotional traits of employees, builds confidence about their performances, and appropriately communicates and provides actual feedback (Rafferty & Griffin, 2004). Leaders that have intellectual stimulation characteristics will encourage their subordinates' efforts on becoming more innovative and creative (Koech, et al, 2012). Individualized consideration refers to the support of leader for each follower (Khan, Rehmat, Hassan Butt, et al, 2020). It is when the leaders being considerate to the subordinates which allows the leaders to build strong relationship with them.

### **Transactional Leadership**

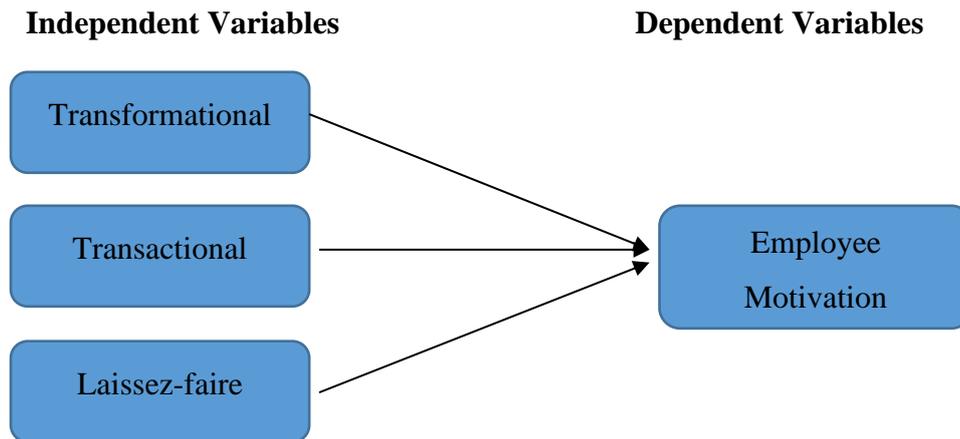
Transactional leadership is an exchange process where the leaders will guide their subordinates in completing their contractual commitments in effective and efficient manner (Raziq et al., 2018). This type of leadership style will motivate the employees by giving rewards to the subordinates whenever they manage to reach the goal. According to Sanda, Ama and Arthur (2017), transactional leaders assign what needs to be done and rewards in exchange for satisfactorily in completing the task. As stated by Sutan Emir Hidayat et al. (2017), transactional leaders will essentially motivate the employees by giving rewards to them when they meet their job goal and punish them when they fail to accomplish the goals. Transactional leaderships are effective in some situation when transactional leaders do not need to focus on the employee's personal development (Northouse, 2007).

### **Laissez-faire leadership**

Gopal et.al. (2014) defines laissez-faire leadership as a passive kind of leadership style and they do not see as caring about their subordinates' issues. According to Breevart and Zacher (2019), laissez-faire leadership is a passive and ineffective way to lead. It is one of the leadership styles where leaders will put the trust on their employees and let them do their job on their own without having to monitor them. Breevart and Zacher (2019) further stated that this type of leadership styles will also decrease the level of trust towards the leader because of no information exchange and therefore the employees will not be able to improve. However, laissez-faire leadership styles make the subordinates have the freedom of completing their job and able to select their own objectives and monitor their own works (Sutan Emir Hidayat, et al. 2017). The subordinates are free to do their work in their own way and be responsible with their own decisions. However, according to Koech and Namusonge (2012), a leader who do not intervene with their subordinates' work affairs is unlikely to put effort to build relationship with them.

In conclusion, the laissez-faire leadership styles effectiveness is depending on the work environment. The situation works well if the environment is conducive to promote the freedom of subordinates to make decisions. Employees who work under supervision of their leaders can either be more motivated by the power to make decisions or they can also be demotivated due to lack of monitoring by the leaders to improve.

### Conceptual Framework



**Figure 1 Conceptual framework for the influences of leadership styles on employee motivation**

Conceptual framework in Figure 1, shows relationship between two variables which are dependent variables and independent variables. The independent variables are consisting of leadership styles which include transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. While for the dependent variables is the employee motivation. This independent and dependent variables for leadership styles and employee motivation framework was built by using the impact of leadership styles on employee motivation (Chowdhury, 2014).

### Methodology

Quantitative data collection is used to determine the relationship between leadership styles and employees' motivation in government agencies in Kedah. The data collection was conducted through online survey questionnaire to get the results from respondents. The questionnaire is divided into 4 section which is Section A; Demographic profile, Section B; Employee Motivation and Section C; Leadership Styles. The study used convenience sampling technique. The target population are 179 employees from the government agencies in Kedah. Referring to Krejcie and Morgan sample size table (1970), the sample size for this study should be 118-123. However, the researchers distributed to 137 employees and all the questionnaires were completely answered. Therefore, this study has achieved 100% response rate. The study used self-administered survey questionnaire as instrument. The questionnaire was divided into two parts; demographics and the five study variables. The questions for study variables were used Likert scale with range from 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3- neutral, 4- agree and 5- strongly agree as measurement scales. The data from the questionnaire received were analysed by using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS).

## Results and Discussion

### Demographic

Frequency analyses discuss about the respondent's demographic profile. The demographic profile that are collected consist of gender, age, marital status, length of service and educational level. The result of respondent's demographic profile is shown in Table 1:

**Table 1: Frequency analysis result: Respondents demographic profile**

<b>Personal Information</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent (%)</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	48	35.0
Female	89	65
<b>Age</b>		
20-29 years old	21	15.3
30-39 years old	25	18.2
40-49 years old	55	40.1
50 years old and above	36	26.3
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	23	16.8
Married	114	83.2
<b>Length of service in current employment</b>		
Less than 6 months	10	7.3
6 months to 1 year	7	5.1
2-5 years	8	5.8
More than 5 years	112	81.8
<b>Educational Level</b>		
SPM	46	33.6
Certificate	4	2.9
Diploma	32	23.4
Degree	43	31.4
Master	12	8.8

Table 1 shows that most of the respondents are female which is 89 equals to 65%. However, only 48 respondents are from male which consist of 35%. Most of the respondents who answered the questionnaire are from the age 40-49 years old which consist of 55 respondents which equals to 40.1%. However, the least respondents who answered this questionnaire are came from the group age 20-29 years old, which equivalent to 15.3%. Other details that had been questioned in demographic section is the marital status. The respondents who are single had a smaller number than the respondents who are married. Which is 23 and 114 respectively.

Other than that, this questionnaire also considers asking on the duration of service in their current employment. Most of the respondents who answered the questions had work more than 5 years, which is 112 respondents with 81.8% and only 7 respondents had work for only 6 months to 1 year. Other demographic profile that we find important is their educational level.

Lowest education level is SPM (46 respondents or 33.6%), and highest education is master level (12 respondents or 8.8%).

### Normality Test

Table 2 shows the summary of normality test for each of the variables in the study. In order to identify the mean tools, the result must be between 1.0-1.0 or 1.96 to 9.6 (Pallant,2010). Therefore, the result of this study shows that the data collected is normally distributed.

**Table 2: Normality test of skewness and kurtosis**

Variable	Skewness	Kurtosis
Employee Motivation	0.066	-0.929
Transformational Leadership	-0.227	0.059
Transactional Leadership	-0.271	-0.195
Laissez-faire Leadership	0.006	-0.767

### Reliability Test

In Table 3, the results on the reliability test shows that the Chronbach's Alpha value for each of the variables of the study. The table shows that all the values of Chronbach's Alpha for dependent and independent variables are above 0.900. Thus, the questionnaires are reliable to measure the dependent and independent variables in this study.

**Table 3: Reliability Analysis Result**

Variables	No. of Item	Chronbach's Alpha	Strength of Association
Employee Motivation	10	0.940	Excellent
Transformational Leadership	15	0.978	Excellent
Transactional Leadership	8	0.969	Excellent
Laissez-faire Leadership	6	0.931	Excellent

### Regression Analysis

Table 4 shows the result on the influence of independent variables which consist of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership on employee motivation. The result shows only transformational leadership is significantly ( $\beta=0.655$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) influencing the employee motivation. The other two independent variables transactional leadership styles ( $\beta=0.121$ ,  $p=0.350$ ) and laissez-faire leadership styles ( $\beta=-0.44$ ,  $p=0.596$ ) are not significantly influencing the employee motivation.

**Table 4 Coefficient Result**

Variables	Standardized Coefficient ( $\beta$ )	T	Sig
Constant		4.014	0.000
Transformational Leadership	0.655	5.171	0.000
Transactional Leadership	0.121	0.937	0.350
Laissez-faire Leadership	-0.44	-0.532	0.596

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Motivation

Table 5 below shows that the amount of variance in R Square in dependent variables can be explained from independent variables. The result shows that R-square is 64.1 % ( $r=0.641$ ) of the variance in employee motivation can be explained by transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles.

**Table 5: Coefficient of Determination (R) Result**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.801	.641	.633	.33789	1.714

a. Predictors: (Constant). Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership

b. Dependent Variable: Employee motivation

### ANOVA Result

ANNOVA analysis indicates the relationship between dependent and independent variables as well as present the fitness and evidence of accuracy model used. Table 6 below shows that regression model is significant with the significant value = 0.000,  $p<0.05$ ). This means that this model is relevant to use as prediction.

**Table 6: ANOVA (factors influence-Employees Motivation)**

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	27.113	3	9.038	79.159	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Residual	15.185	133	.144		
Total	42.298	136			

a.Predictors: (Constant, Laissez faire Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership

b. Dependent Variable: Employee Motivation.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

In conclusion, the aims of this study to identify how leadership styles influence employees' motivation in government agencies. From the result, it shows that 64.1 % ( $r=0.641$ ) of the variance in employee motivation can be explained by the three leadership styles: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles.

The results also shows that only the transformational leadership has a significant ( $\beta=0.655$ ,  $p<0.000$ ) influence on the employee motivation. This evidence is supported by the study conducted by Chowdhury (2014) at public sector that produced the same results where transformational leadership have positive influence towards employee motivation.

The results for the influence of transactional leadership styles ( $\beta=0.121$ ,  $p=0.350$ ) on the employees' motivation in the government agencies in Kedah is not significant. This result is not supported by previous research and need more research to confirm. Studies by Chaudhry (2012) found that transactional leadership style can motivate employees as compared to those have a transformational leadership style.

The results for the influence of laissez-faire leadership styles ( $\beta = -0.44$ ,  $p = 0.0596$ ) on the employees' motivation in the government agencies in Kedah is also not significant. However, this finding is supported by Chaudhry (2012) where laissez-faire leadership styles are not suitable to boost the motivation level of employees as compared to other leadership styles.

Thus, we can conclude that transformational leadership style has the most influence on employees' motivation in government agencies. As a conclusion, it is suggested for the public sector agency to give more training on transformational leadership to leaders of each department, for them to develop the skills of transformational leadership to bring the government agencies to higher level through motivated employees. Employees that are fully motivated will show more commitment and will serve community better. However, further research with bigger sample size that covers more government agencies throughout Malaysia needs to be done to confirm these findings.

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