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### **The Mediating Effects of Transparency on Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance in Malaysia Public Sector**

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#### **Abstract**

This empirical article addresses a gap in the literature by testing Transparency as a mediator in the relationship between Transformational Leadership (TL) and Employee Performance (EP) among Administrative and Diplomatic Officers in Malaysian Public Sector. A survey of 380 Management and Professional Group (grade 41-54) of ADO produced 208 completed questionnaires, which were used to collect the data for this study. The sample size for this investigation was calculated using the G\*power software. The data in the study was analysed using the structural equation model (SEM), specifically the partial least squares-based structural equation modelling. The measurement and structural models were each subjected to two stages of analysis. The findings show that transparency has a substantial impact on EP. It has supplied sufficient evidence to support the idea that employees who are transparent perform better. The transparency consistently mediates the

link between TL and EP. The study is projected to make three contributions: it will add to the literature database on the causes of transparency, it will change our understanding of the relationship between TL and EP by introducing transparency as a mediator, and it will serve as a basis for future researchers.

### **Keywords**

Transparency, Transformational Leadership, Employee Performance, Administrative and Diplomatic Officers

### **Introduction**

Employee performance is a primary concern for any firm. Employees play an essential role in realizing organisational objectives. Employees are also crucial to organisational performance because they have the necessary skills and competencies for implementing out organisational planning and strategy (Ismail, Abdul-Halim, & Joarder, 2015). Significant research has emphasised the necessity of improving employee performance since it results in a competitive advantage. As a result, it is vital for businesses to devise strategies for improving employee performance (Ismail, Majid, Jibrin-Bida, & Joarder, 2021). Employee performance in an organisation is inextricably linked to its corporate goals and stakeholder expectations. If employees fail to perform, an organisation cannot prosper or survive (Pattnaik & Pattnaik, 2021). As a result, the administration has worked diligently to undertake different changes and reforms in the civil service.

Despite this, the National Institute of Public Administration (INTAN) observed mass media exposure to many manifestations of the problem of the collapse of values and ethics involving civil officials, such as break of trust, fraud, inefficiency, delays in a service process, and abuse of authority (JPA, 2020). The Public Complaints Bureau has received public complaints demonstrating the shortcomings in public sector service (PCB). According to PCB research, from 2016 to 2020, the public's dissatisfaction with public services increased by over a thousand complaints per year until 2019. (Table1).

Table 1. Public Complains on Governments Service

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of Complaints</b>
2016	4074
2017	5441
2018	6387
2019	9177
2020	8727

Source: PCB Statistic by Year, 2016-2020, Public Complaints Bureau (2022)

The public sector employee in general has yet to establish a high degree of service delivery due to poor performance as evidenced by the amount of complaints received each year (Public Bureau Complaints, 2017-2020). Employees' performance issues in the public sector are primarily the result of poor behaviour,

such as misbehaviour and abuse of power, which has resulted in complaints (Public Complaints Bureau, 2020). It demonstrates that they are in violation of Chapter D, i.e., paragraph (2) of General Order 4 of the Public Officers (Conduct and Discipline) Act of 1993, which states that public sector personnel must be responsible, trustworthy, efficient, loyal, and hardworking (General Orders, 2010). Besides, public servants must follow the job description, which clearly defines their responsibilities in carrying out their duties (PKPA Bil. 4, 2018). Furthermore, public officers are obligated by the Public Officers Regulations 1993, which provide that a public servant may not forsake his or her public obligations to pursue private interests that conflict with those of the public (Public Officers Regulations, 1993). A violation of this directive might bring the civil service into discredit. There will be no public trust in the credibility of public sector employees.

Although the number of staff performance issues is still minor, they are having an influence on the civil service if not addressed immediately (Syaharuddin et al., 2017). Such an issue would degrade the reputation of the public sector and raise issues about civil servants' ability to perform their jobs quickly and effectively. As a result, an investigation of staff performance is being conducted in the hope that this study can narrow the performance gap.

Transformational leadership has been linked to organisational change (Afshari & Gibson, 2016; Holten & Brenner, 2015; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Transformational leadership is appropriate for dealing with organisational change (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Eisenbach et al., 1999). Transparency has been found in previous studies to increase the association between managerial roles and personal development (J. H. Ali & Sentosa, 2008); consequently, this study proposes transparency as a mediator of the relationship between TL and EP. Thus, this study proposes transparency as the mediator of the relationship between TL and EP. Hence, special consideration is given to how transformational leadership and transparency matter in improving EP in this study.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Transformational Leadership (TL)**

Transformational leadership is defined as a leader's ability to change the work environment, motivation, habits, and values perceived by subordinates in order for them to better their performance and accomplish specified organisational goals (Bass, 1990). Transformational leadership is defined as leadership that entails organisational change.

Furthermore, Den Hartog, Van Mijen, and Koopman defined transformational leadership in 1997 as leadership that drives the development of subordinates' full potential, higher needs, good value systems, moralities, and motivation. Meanwhile, Northouse (2015) defined transformational leadership as a process that alters and transforms people. It entails building a closer relationship between leaders and followers.

TL devotes the majority of its resources to employee development. It can be inferred that within leadership, a leader seeks to raise the awareness of his subordinates in order to emphasise the importance of work, self-worth, and greater transformation, particularly in order to achieve organisational goals (Fakhri et.al., 2020). According to Avolio and Bass, transformational leadership has four dimensions: idealistic influence, inspiring motivation, intellectual stimulation, and adaptable considerations (Northouse, 2019).

### **Transparency**

In general, transparency is described as the free flow of information (Holzner and Holzner, 2006; Piotrowski, 2007). Transparency denotes truthfulness and openness (Jensen, 2001; Hofstede et al, 2004).

According to Lynn, 2001, transparency is making decisions and implementing it properly based on the right procedures and regulations, by providing information that can easily be accessed by those who are related to that decision. In other words, it is the disclosure of any related statement and information to the interested party/stakeholder in a timely manner (Salin & Abidin, 2011).

Disclosure of information is regarded as a means of managing the information needs of many types of stakeholders, structuring social actions as a means of increasing economic profitability, and incorporating ethical, social, and environmental values into decision-making processes (Elisa Baraibar-Diez 2017).

Transparency is sometimes defined as the disclosure of timely and publicly available information for the purposes of openness, accountability, and the creation of trust (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2014). The fundamental rationale is that by instituting transparency measures, enterprises, organisations, and governmental institutions enable "the public to receive knowledge about the operations and structures of a given body" (Etzioni, 2010).

### **Transparency and Employee Performance (EP)**

Several previous research studies have been undertaken in order to determine the relationship between transparency and EP. According to researchers, transparency leads to improved employee performance (Chansuchai, 2017).

Furthermore, researches found that transparency improves employee performance. (Gilang et. al, 2018; Adnyana & Sari Dewi, 2020; Dusane & Bhamare, 2021). Sulaiman et al. (2018) in their study examine the relationship of transparency with EP. Their study is in Aceh's Public Servants involved with 270 respondents by using probability sampling technique. Transparency has positive and significant effects on the employee performance. This finding demonstrates that the service industry in Aceh fosters employee performance by applying organisational transparency.

Similarly, study of Ali and colleagues (2017) empirically examines the relationship of transparency and employee performance. Result of their study portrayed that transparency have significant positive relationship with performance. Furthermore, Riyanto and Lukertina (2019) investigate the relationship between transparency and EP. According to the findings of their study, transparency has a favourable and significant association with EP. Similarly, numerous research studies have been undertaken to determine the relationship between transparency and EP.

### **Mediating Role of transparency**

Transparency has continued to draw considerable attention from researchers and practitioners because of its benefits to individuals and to organizations (Park, 2011). Past studies have shown that transparency is used as mediating role. Transparency has been recognised as a mediating element in various connections, including the relationship between corporate social responsibility and business reputation (Diez, 2017). Transparency thus serves as a bridge between corporate social responsibility and business reputation. The findings are based on data from 22 Spanish listed firms from 2002 to 2015.

A recent study in public company context by Mangoting (2019) on the relationship of CSR to tax avoidance using 162 samples of the manufacturing companies dated of observation 2015-2017 found that transparency is able to mediate the relationship between CSR and tax avoidance. Studies in which transparency is a mediator are between corruption and citizen satisfaction (Park, 2011), social media in government and trust in government (Song, 2015) and corporate governance, transparency and performance of Malaysian companies (Che Haat, 2008), E-government and Public Trust (Alaaraj & Hassan, 2016) and Quality Practices and Performance (Ali et. al., 2017). Since previous studies have shown that transparency is used to look at the relationship between variables and performance, thus, this study hypothesized that transparency have a mediating role as a mediator between TL and EP.

### **Methodology**

#### **Unit Analysis, Population and Sampling Size**

The nature of the study and the problem dictate the unit of analysis (Neuman, 1997). Since the current study focuses on a problem affecting public sector employees, the unit of analysis for this study is the individual and focus on the Administrative and Diplomatic Officers (ADO) Management and Professional Group (grade 41-54).

The population is the entire group of people, events, or items of interest that the researcher want to explore. The target population for the current study referred to the Malaysian Public Service organisations while its accessible

population is the Malaysian Public Service organisations the Management and Professional Group (grade 41-54) of the ADO Scheme of service (PTD: Skim Pegawai Tadbir dan Diplomantik) currently serving in the Malaysian Public Service organisations across Ministries.

A stratified sampling strategy was used in this study. The stratified sample approach was chosen because it ensured homogeneity within a group, unit within a specific department, and heterogeneity across groups. Respondents were first sorted into mutually exclusive groups based on grade 41,44,48,52,54 throughout the sampling phase. On this basis, it was supposed that there is variation across groups, but not within each group.

### Data Collection

This study distributes the google form questionnaire via a link of google form to each ministry will be based on the number of respondents in each stratum, which was based on disproportionate stratified sampling method. Table 1 present the questionnaire distribution for this study and the response rate. The usable response rate for this study is 44.3% and is considered satisfactory. In addition, the G\*Power determined that 129 samples are enough for this study; thus, the response rate for this study is considered adequate as it exceeds the minimum sample size of 129 per G\*Power.

Table 2. Questionnaire Distribution and Response Rate

Response	Frequency/Rate
The total number of questionnaires in google form was distributed via a link through the call to response fixed line/mobile number/WhatsApp	400
No. questionnaires via google form filled/returned	208
Response Rate	52%

Source: The authors

Table 3. Instruments of Variables

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha	Sources
Transformational Leadership (TL)	5	0.848	Alrowwad et al., 2020
Transparency	4	0.940	Mohamad, 2015
Employee Performance (EP)	5	0.857	Koopmans et al., 2014

Source: The authors

### Research Instrument

The questionnaire instrument was created using the dependent and independent variables described in the research framework. The items used to measure the variables were adopted or adapted from earlier research, with validation and phrasing chapters tailored to the individual samples under consideration.

As shown in Table 3, this study's transformational leadership (TL) adapted five (5) items including challenges, new perspective, confidence, abilities and coaching. For transparency, this study adapted four (4) items including share, ask, follow up and suggestion. Five (5) items including management, achievement, priorities, performance and collaboration were used to assess employee performance (EP). The respondent could rate the TL, Transparency and EP statement in the questionnaire on a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree).

### **Data Analysis**

Hair et al. (2017) recommended that PLS-SEM analysis was used to analyze the data gathered for this study to obtain good model results. PLS-SEM analysis primarily consists of two parts. The measurement model is evaluated in the first section to ascertain whether the measurement model developed for this study is valid and reliable. To confirm whether the measurement model developed for this study is valid and reliable, the measurement model is evaluated in the first section. Another section considers the structural model to see if exogenous variables are collinear, the significance of the relationship between variables, the size of the effect, and the predictive value of the model in this study (Yusoff, 2018).

### **Measurement Model**

Convergent validity and reliability as well as discriminant validity were evaluated in this study during the process of measurement model assessment. Factor loading and composite reliability must typically be considered in addition to the single index of average variance extraction (AVE) when establishing convergence reliability (CR) (Hair et al., 2017). As shown in Table 4, the convergent validity and reliability can be considered acceptable if the factor loading (Jr et al., 2018), CR (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), and AVE (Fornell & Larker, 1981) are all greater than 0.5.

Additionally, composite reliability was used to test the measurement model's reliability; for convergent validity, average variance extracted was used; and for discriminant validity, a FornellLarcker criterion was used. These measures have demonstrated that the data are valid and reliable for further analysis. It is acceptable to use factor loadings with a minimum value between 0.60 and 0.90 (Joe F. Hair et al., 2014), and the composite reliability was set at 0.70 and higher. The SEM supports the analysis of independent variables (IV) with the dependent variable when the threshold is significantly higher than the minimum requirements set (DV). Table 4 lists the reliability and convergent validity, while Table 5 displays the discriminant validity.

Table 4. Internal Consistency Reliability and Convergent Validity

Construct	Item	Outer Loading	CR	AVE	Convergent Validity (AVE > 0.5)
TL	TL_1	0.896	0.954	0.807	Yes
	TL_2	0.907			
	TL_3	0.917			
	TL_4	0.936			
	TL_5	0.833			
TP	TP_1	0.816	0.891	0.622	Yes
	TP_2	0.788			
	TP_3	0.791			
	TP_4	0.821			
	TP_5	0.724			
TRSP	TRSP_1	0.843	0.904	0.702	Yes
	TRSP_2	0.746			
	TRSP_3	0.890			
	TRSP_4	0.867			

Source: The authors.

Notes: TP = Task Performance, TL = Transformational Leadership, TRSP = Transparency

Table 5. Discriminant Validity (Fornell and Larcker)

	PERFORMANCE	TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP	TRANSPARENCY
PERFORMANCE	0.789		
TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP	0.406	0.898	
TRANSPARENCY	0.564	0.409	0.838

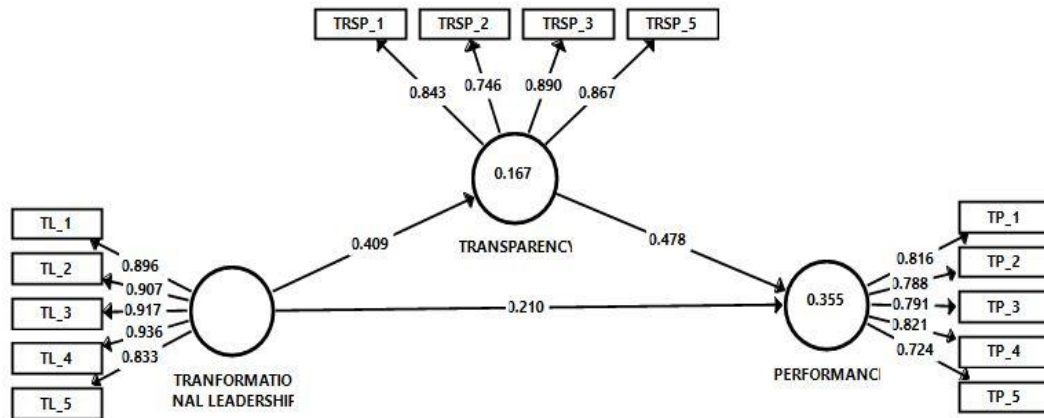
Source: The authors

### Structural Model

The structural model represents the interaction of the model's exogenous and endogenous factors. It demonstrates how accurately the theoretical model predicts the suggested paths. The statistical significance of each path coefficient, which displays all path coefficients as well as the estimated model's explanatory power, can then be utilised to draw a conclusion. The bootstrapping method generated the path coefficients and corresponding t-values (5,000 samples). The R<sup>2</sup> of the endogenous constructs are used to evaluate the estimated model's explanatory power. According to Hair et al. (2017), R<sup>2</sup> can range from 0.25 (weak) to 0.50 (medium) to 0.75. (substantial). The model illustrated in figure 1 below shows that 19.0 per cent of the variance in co-operative performance is explained



by the model ( $R^2 = 0.190$ ), thereby regarded as a weak effect. However, the  $R^2$  value of OC is 0.332, indicating that the exogenous construct, LO explain 33.2% of the variance in OC, therefore regarded as a moderate effect (Hair et al., 2017). The following assessment after the predictive accuracy ( $R^2$ ) was the effect size ( $f^2$ ). The effect size is a metric used to evaluate the relative influence of a predictor construct on an endogenous construct (Cohen, 1988). To measure the effect size, Cohen's (1988) guidelines of 0.02, 0.15 and 0.35, indicating small, medium and large effect, respectively, were used.



**Figure 1.** PLS Algorithms Results  
 Source: The authors

Table 6. Summary of Hypothesis Testing

Hypotheses	Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-Statistics	Level of Significance	Decision
H1	TL -> EP	0.210	3.426	0.284 - 0.522	Supported
H2	TL -> T -> EP	0.196	5.451	0.133 - 0.272	Supported

Source: The authors.

Note: \* $p < 0.01$

The PLS algorithms were applied, and the significance of the resulting route coefficients and the mediation impact of organisational commitment were assessed using bootstrapping. Table 6 shows the outcomes and decision rule for the proposed linkages. First, it was proposed that TL has a major impact on EP, hence H1 is supported. The second hypothesis sought to investigate the indirect effect of TL on EP via the mediating role of Transparency. The indirect impact was favourable and considerable, as seen in Table 6, and hence H2 was supported. The model revealed a substantial connection mediation, indicating that the mediation is statistically significant. The VAF calculation yielded 0.482, indicating that the

mediation is partial according to Hair et al. (2013)'s threshold of VAF over 0.8 indicating full mediation. The study looked at the impact of TL on EP as well as the role of transparency in moderating the relationship between TL and EP in the setting of the public sector. It gives empirical validation for all of the conceptual model's hypotheses. Overall, both TL and Transparency provide a solid platform for improving employee performance.

Table 7. R Square (R<sup>2</sup>), f Square (f<sup>2</sup>) and Q Square (Q<sup>2</sup>)

<b>Relationship</b>	<b>R 2</b>	<b>f 2</b>	<b>Q2</b>
TL -> EP	0.355	0.057	0.205
Transparency -> EP		0.295	
TL -> Transparency	0.167	0.201	0.110

Source: The authors.

The following assessment after the predictive accuracy (R<sup>2</sup>) was the effect size (f<sup>2</sup>). The effect size is a metric used to evaluate the relative influence of a predictor construct on an endogenous construct (Cohen, 1988). Cohen (1988) criteria of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 were utilised to measure the effect size, suggesting a minor, medium, and large effect, respectively. From Table 7, both TL (0.057) and Transparency (0.295) has a medium effect size in producing R<sup>2</sup> in EP. While, in terms of producing R<sup>2</sup> in Transparency, TL (0.201) has a medium size effect in producing R<sup>2</sup> for Transparency. Furthermore, the predictive significance of the model is tested using the blindfolding process. The two Q<sup>2</sup> values for EP (Q<sup>2</sup>= 0.205) and Transparency (Q<sup>2</sup>= 0.110) are more than 0, indicating that the model has a sufficient predictive relevance. If the Q<sup>2</sup> value is larger than 0, the model has predictive relevance for a particular endogenous construct (Hair et al., 2017).

### **Discussion**

Result has shown that TL influence the EP. In the work environment among PTD transformational leadership is practiced. Friendly, proactive, decisive PTD leadership as well as dominant causes them to be easy to influence others and high interpersonal skills can create a cheerful atmosphere and encourage each other's followers to cooperate and build high teamwork spirit. Thus, improve employee performance. This is consistent with the findings of Chrisanty, Gunawan, Wijayanti, & Soetjipto (2021) on 257 branches of a state-owned bank, study by Virgiawan, Riyanto, & Endri (2021) used 120 respondents from Ministry of Public Works and Public Housing (PUPR) of the Republic of Indonesia and study by Ferozi & Chang (2021) in Afghanistan. As a result, this analysis supports earlier results that effective transformational leadership improves employee performance.

Further, this study also found that the transparency is significant to EP. PTD's leadership is inclined towards openness such as to receive opinions and feedback from his/her workmates, interpersonal communication at the workplace also is part of PTD efforts to practice transparency. With the willingness of the

employees to accept feedback and suggestions from peers, leaders and other stakeholders, the decisions taken would be more meaningful without hidden agenda. PTD's transformational leadership also adapts to innovative services, interactions and effective coordination, partnership information and efficiency. The impact organizations can implement sharing information optimally. The findings of this study are consistent with those of Ali et al. (2017), who demonstrated that transparency has a mediating effect on the relationship between quality practises and performance. This study supports the premise that managers perform better when they are transparent. The bootstrapping of indirect impact results revealed that transparency acts as a mediator between TL and EP.

From the discussion, it can be concluded that the hypotheses for this study were supported. First, this study found significant for the direct relationship TL-EP. These findings show that organisation should provide more transformational leadership elements in their organisation to achieve the employee performance. In conclusion, current study findings indicated that TL and transparency significantly impact EP. Finally, transparency mediated the impact of TL on EP.

### **Managerial Implications**

For businesses, including organisation, TL is essential. Organisation must have TL to be competitive, and performance has previously been linked to TL. A TL in organization will probably increase its capability and performance. Organisation that want to perform better are advised to adopt a TL behaviour within their organization. In addition, the study provides evidence that the combination of TL and transparency has a substantial effect on the EP. This research helps organisations with a better understanding of how to design their workforce and make decisions. The findings suggest that TL and transparency should be utilized to achieve better performance.

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