

# The Relationship between Leadership Styles and Employees' Performance Among Academicians at Politeknik Mukah, Sarawak

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## Abstract

The purpose of this research is to see how different leadership styles, such as transformational leadership, democratic leadership, and laissez-faire leadership affect employees' performance among academicians at Politeknik Mukah in Sarawak. The sample size comprised of 148 participants from seven departments in Politeknik Mukah with non-probability sampling, and a structured questionnaire had been used to collect responses from the respondents. The study's major findings demonstrated that democratic leadership had the greatest impact on employee performance. However, the majority of academicians felt that these three leadership styles help them perform better. This was supported by the findings, which revealed that all of the researched leadership styles have a significant association on employees' performance. Furthermore, at the completion of the research, the researcher suggests that all three leadership styles can be used in order to improve the performance of the academicians, and raise the sample size for future research.

*Keywords: - employees' performance, leadership style, transformational leadership style, democratic leadership style, laissez-faire leadership style*

## 1. Introduction

In Malaysia, employees especially in governmental agencies are being criticized for inefficiency, poor performance, poor accountability, lack of flexibility, and red tape (Said, 2015). Same goes to educational service especially in higher education, employees' performance is a major issue (Veeriah, 2017). The education is needed to pursuit of national values and aspirations (Abdul-Jaleel et al., 2014) and in generating innovative knowledge in order to promote economic development (Sumintono, 2015). The future generation especially students, need to be well-shaped, directed, and fitted to be on the correct track, and they need to be trained in a good environment by passionate and committed educators (Veeriah, 2017). Seeing the important role that an academician carries, if the academicians' performance remains poor, the objective to generate quality students and create a successful educational institution will not be realized. However, there are key factors that affect employees' performance in the organization. Based on research by Sajid and Nasir (2014); Bushra et al. (2011); Tan (2011); Randeree and Chaudhry (2012); Wang and Howell (2012) and Zehir et al. (2012) asserted that the style of a leadership is a factor that would influences performance of the employees. Lokman et al. (2016) asserted that the leadership characteristics and credibility of an educational institution's management team, as well as the presence of excellent performance

among academicians, are undeniably linked to the institution's success as an organization.

Research conducted by Strebler (2004) stated that the poor employees' performance may lower the productivity of the organization and it also has a bad result on employee's commitment and enthusiasm. Based on the past researches, Ling and Sani (2013) who researched the performance of teachers in Sarawak, found that teachers' performance was moderate, however Tan (2011) reported that teacher performance in Sarawak's schools was low. In a different place, the researcher found that performance level amongst the academicians at six regions of Tanzania (Mkumbo, 2012); Bomet County in Kenya (Gastil, 1994); and Assumption University of Thailand (Cheasakul and Varma, 2016) are relatively between moderate and low level. This phenomenon cannot be underestimated and left prolonged as education has its own significance to the nation. Having said that, it is important to know that the performance of the academicians and the effectiveness of an educational institution depend largely on the management team's leadership skills (Jamalullail, 2014).

The concern is how well the leadership styles of the superior can work and help academicians to accomplish and improve their performance levels? Furthermore, given the wide range of effects on performance of the academicians and the shortage of research in this area, particularly in the Malaysian context, this study is critical in determining how the

main leader's leadership style affects academicians' performance in higher education. At this point, it is necessary to investigate the relationship of the leadership styles practiced by the leader towards the performance of the academicians in Politeknik Mukah.

### **1.1 Research Objectives**

The research objectives of this study are to examine the association between transformational, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership style and employees' performance among academicians at Politeknik Mukah, Sarawak, and to examine the most influence leadership style on employees' performance among academicians at Politeknik Mukah, Sarawak.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Employees' Performance**

Past researchers have proposed a variety of definitions for employee's performance. It can be explained in a variety of ways. Employee's performance, according to Ashan (2012), is interpreted as the achievement of given standards in terms of completeness and accuracy over a set period of time. In the scope of academicians' performance, Obilade (1999) had stated that it can be defined as an endeavor to attain organizational goals set by them while performing duties in the institution system at a given time. According to Shigenobu and Ikeda (2009), employees' performance can be measured in terms of increased productivity, ease of use of new technologies, and highly engaged employees. In addition, Zhang (2016) stated that because educational service is a manpower-intensive sector and employees are one of the most valuable assets, employee performance has an impact on the country's profitability. In a nutshell, if educational service staff are ineffective, the objective to generate quality students and create an effective educational institution will not be realised. As a result, the leader can motivate and raise academicians' effective performance by analysing their requirements and attempting to meet them. Gabzhalilov (2015) explained that employee performance is influenced by a variety of elements, with leadership styles being one of them. Furthermore, he also added that a leader's behaviour and the style he or she chooses to adopt might have an impact on work results or the way tasks are accomplished. It is undeniable that a leader's style has an impact on workforce productivity.

### **2.2 Transformational Leadership Style**

The connections made between leaders and followers are the subject of transformational theories. Transformational leadership is defined as a leader's capacity to inspire followers to put the organization's needs ahead of their own (Bass, 1985, 1996 as cited by Murphy and Drodge, 2004). Ahmad et al. (2014) agreed that leaders who adopt transformational style will stress charismatic behaviour that inspires, motivates, enhances intellectual capacity, and awakens subordinates to them while also considering the requirements of their followers personally. Briefly, transformational leaders motivate and inspire people through their energy and personal vision (Stoner, 2001). As stated by Champoux (2011), according to empirical study, there is a significant relationship between transformative leadership and employee performance.

### **2.3 Democratic Leadership Style**

Democratic leadership is a style of leadership that invites employees to participate in the organization's decision-making process (Nawoseing'ollan and Roussel, 2017). According to David and Masare (2017), this leadership style refers to a situation in which a leader solicits the followers' perspectives and ideas before making a final choice. In fact, the leader may ask for feedback from his or her followers on a tentative action plan before making a final choice. He also remarked that democratic leaders will demonstrate concern and consideration for others by listening with empathy and understanding. In the context of educational services, Jay (2014) stated that this leadership will involve opinions and cooperation by academicians, therefore, this serves to create a collaborative environment in educational institutions. Educational institutions become more democratic through implementing participatory acts and decision-making. Thus, researcher believes that democratic leaders are capable of fostering open communication between all levels of employees.

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

“Leave it be” is the meaning of Laissez-faire in French. According to Alan (2013), it refers to superior who empower their employees to work independently. According to Kendoa (2013), laissez-faire leadership entails allowing group members to make their own decisions. In the same vein, Muhammad & Usman (2012) posits a laissez faire leadership style provides employees with more opportunities and the least

amount of guidance in organisational decision making. In short, the laissez-faire leadership style is also can be described as the “hands-off style”. According to Alan (2013), a laissez-faire leadership style can be effective provided the leader constantly analyses performance and provides feedback to team members. Individual team members must be experienced, highly talented, trustworthy, motivated, and capable of working independently for the leadership style to be effective. However, in contrast, Ronald (2011) believed that a laissez-faire leadership style can lead to instability, inefficiency, and anarchy.

### 2.5 Relationship of Leadership Styles and Employees' Performance

According to Shahab and Nisa (2014), leadership styles have a favorable impact on the performance of the employees, and as a result, Gul et al. (2012) asserted that they play critical roles in ensuring the performance growth of individual and organizational. A study conducted by Mohammed (2014) exposed that there is a significant relationship between leadership style and employee performance in an organization. This study also found that the leadership style of a superior has an impact on the organization's capacity to reach corporate objectives, aims, and desires. In the same line, research conducted by Babatunde and Emem (2015) found that there was a substantial association between leadership style and employee performance when it came to accomplishing organizational objectives and aims.

Next, the researchers have found that there was a significant relationship between all the independent variables and dependent variable based on past researches. For example, Howell (2005); Dumdum et al. (2002) and Dvir (2002) have reaffirmed the significant association between transformative leadership and performance of the employees at various levels. Furthermore, the earlier study by Dolatabadi and Safa (2010) exposed that democratic leadership style has a beneficial impact on staff performance, role clarity, shared ideals, and dedication. Next, according to several well-known studies, the laissez-faire approach leads to greater employee's performance and higher satisfaction of job, which might be harmful to employees if the in-charge of the team does not manage their time properly or is not self-motivated to complete their work efficiently (Martin et al., 2013).

In conclusion, leaders must collaborate with their followers to achieve optimal organizational performance. In their study, Walumbwa (2011) and Sudi (2013) found that leadership style had a strong

influence on the performance of the employees.

### 2.6 Hypothesis

H<sub>1</sub>: There is a significant relationship between transformational leadership and employees' performance among academicians at Politeknik Mukah, Sarawak.

H<sub>2</sub>: There is a significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership and employees' performance among academicians at Politeknik Mukah, Sarawak.

H<sub>3</sub>: There is a significant relationship between democratic leadership and employees' performance among academicians at Politeknik Mukah, Sarawak.

### 2.7 Conceptual Framework

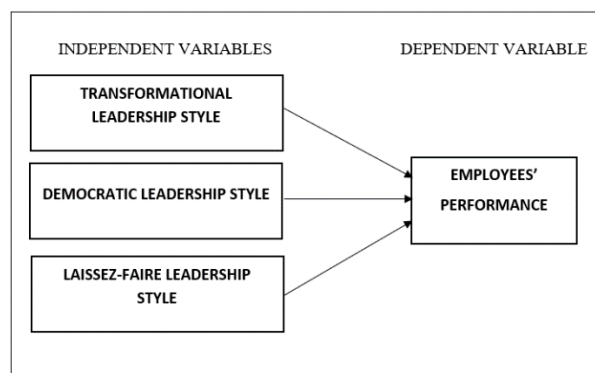


Figure 1: The conceptual framework of the relationship between leadership styles and employees' performance among academicians at Politeknik Mukah, Sarawak adopted from Dastane (2020).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Sample Frame, Population and Sample Size

In this research, the sampling frame was made from the numbers of academicians in Politeknik Mukah, Sarawak. The total population for this study was 211 academicians from seven departments in Politeknik Mukah, Sarawak. The formula created by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) was used. If the total population was up to 210, thus the sample size for this research were 136 respondents. However, the researcher managed to collect responses from 148 respondents.

### 3.2 Sampling Technique and Instrument

The researcher applied convenience sampling method. Questionnaire was used for this study. The questionnaire has been divided into three sections which were Section A, Section B, and Section C. For

transformational leadership style, the questions were adopted from Bass and Avolio (1992), Laissez-faire leadership style adopted from Anyango (2015); Iqbal, et al. (2015) and Chaudhary (2014), while for Democratic leadership style adopted from Gordon (1998), and for employees' performance, the questions were adopted from Wanjala (2014). A Likert scale with a 5 points system was used to measure responses on the questionnaire. Items were scored on the following keys: 1-Strongly Disagree, 2-Disagree, 3- Neutral, 4-Agree, and 5- Strongly Agree.

### 3.3 Reliability of Instrument

The acceptable of Cronbach's Alpha is above 0.70 (Sekaran and Bougie, 2013). Thus, according to the survey results, all variables considered reliable to be tested since they fulfill the traditional reliability values. The table below shows the result derived from the survey being conducted.

Table 1: Summary of reliability analysis results.

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Transformational leadership style	10	0.951
Democratic Leadership style	8	0.958
Laissez-faire leadership style	6	0.849
Employees' performance	10	0.911

### 3.4 Data Analysis

After collecting the questionnaires from the respondents, the data was analyzed using SPSS version 22. Pearson correlation statistic was applied in investigating the relationship between independent variables and dependent variable. Meanwhile, multiple regression statistics were employed to determine the most influential leadership style on employee performance among academicians at Politeknik Mukah in Sarawak.

## 4. Finding and Analysis

The tables below show the frequency analysis results derived from SPSS Version 22. The frequency analysis of respondents' demography was shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of frequency analysis of demography.

Demographic Profile	Number of Respondents (n = 148)	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	50	33.8
Female	98	66.2
<b>Age</b>		
< 25	1	7
26 - 35	75	50.7
36 - 50	72	48.6
<b>Education Level</b>		
Bachelor Degree	104	70.3
Master	44	29.7
<b>Years of Employment</b>		
< 2	72	48.6
3 – 5	8	5.4
6 – 10	12	8.1
11 and above	56	37.8
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	60	40.5
Married	88	59.5

The result showed that, from 148 respondents, 33.8% of respondents were male, and 66.2% were female. The result also showed that 7% were under 25 years old, 50.7% were 26-35 years old, and 48.6% were 36-50 years old. The table also clearly stated that most of the respondents were qualified with Bachelor Degree and Master, 70.3% and 29.7%, respectively. Besides that, 48.36% of the respondents have been working for not more than 2 years, 5.4% for 3-5 years, 8.1% for 6-10 years, and 37.8% for 11 years and above. Lastly, for marital status, majority of respondents were married rather than single which contributed to 59.5% and 40.5% consecutively.

### 4.1 Correlation Analysis

In this study, correlation analysis is utilized to determine the relationship between the dependent and independent variables. The results were analyzed by using the Rules of Thumb for correlation coefficient size by Hair et al. (2007). The table below shows the correlation analysis result.

Table 3: Correlation analysis.

Variables	Significant Value (p)	Pearson Correlation (r <sub>s</sub> )
Transformational Leadership Style	0.000	0.662**

Democratic Leadership Style	0.000	0.750**
Laissez-faire Leadership Style	0.000	0.509**

Based on the table above, it shows that there is an association between transformational leadership style, democratic leadership style, and laissez-faire leadership style with employees' performance among academicians at Politeknik Mukah. According to the findings, there are significant correlations between all independent variables and dependent variable. Transformational leadership style considered as moderate positive correlations ( $r=0.662$ ;  $p=0.00$ ), while democratic leadership style considered as strong positive correlations ( $r=0.750$ ;  $p=0.00$ ), and laissez-faire leadership style considered as moderate positive correlations ( $r=0.509$ ;  $p=0.00$ ). This means that when the transformational leadership style, democratic leadership style, and laissez-faire leadership style increase, the employees' performance will also increase. On that account, all of the study's hypotheses are accepted, and there is a significant association between transformational leadership style, democratic leadership style, and laissez-faire leadership style with employees' performance among academicians at Politeknik Mukah.

#### 4.2 Regression Analysis

Regression analysis is used to determine the relationship between independent variables and the dependent variable, as well as to determine which independent variables are the most significant in relation to the dependent variable. The tables below show the regression analysis results.

Table 4: Model summary.

Model	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	0.575	0.566	0.30563

Based on the Table 4, R-square value will justify the percentage of independent variables which explained dependent variable in this study. From the result, it showed that 57.5% of all independent variables explain to the variance of the dependent variable. Another 42.5% explained by other variables.

Table 5: Anova.

Model	F	Sig.
1 Regression	64.900	0.000

Next, based on the table above, the F value is 64.900. It indicates that the model is fit when the F value is more than 1. It is also highly significant as the p value is 0.000.

Table 6: Coefficients.

Model	Standardized Coefficients	Sig.
	Beta	
1 (Constant)		
Mean_TLS	0.174	0.081
Mean_DLS	0.601	0.000
Mean_LLS	0.018	0.813

For coefficients result, the highest beta value means has the highest contribution to the dependent variable. According to Table 6, it showed that democratic leadership style was the highest contribution to employees' performance and significantly contribute to the variance of the employees' performance ( $\beta=0.601$ ,  $p=0.000$ ).

#### 5. Conclusion

In conclusion, to answer the research objectives, it revealed that the transformational, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership style have the significant association on employees' performance among academician at Politeknik Mukah. Democratic leadership style has a strong positive correlation, while transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles have a moderate positive correlation. The results were supported by past researches. According Bateh and Heyliger's (2014) research in Florida, they discovered that faculty members who used transformational leadership as their primary style were able to improve their students' performance. Besides that, Nuhu (2010) reported in an earlier study that democratic leadership style has a significant impact on employee performance in Uganda's Kampala District Council. Kumar (2015) believes that the most effective leadership style is one that allows employees some degree of autonomy in implementing any leadership style, including laissez-faire leadership. Next, this study also revealed that the democratic leadership style is the most contribute to employees' performance rather than transformational and laissez-faire leadership style. This is because based on the regression analysis results, the democratic leadership style had the highest beta value. This finding is consistent with Aunga and Masare (2017) who found that democratic leadership style has the greatest impact on teachers' satisfaction with their work, followed by transformational leadership style.

The researchers have made several recommendations based on the overall research findings that have been addressed in order to improve employees' performance in the workplace in the future, particularly in the setting of higher academic institutions. According to the researcher, the organization should adopt and promote democratic leadership style more because it has the greatest impact on employees' performance. For example, a leader may be using democratic leadership by listening to their subordinates' opinions and involving them in the decision-making process. This will raise subordinate morale since the superior will consider their inputs, making them feel respected and fulfilled. As a result, staff performance will improve, particularly among academicians at Politeknik Mukah.

Besides that, researchers also recommend to apply a transformational leadership style because it has a major impact on performance of the employees. Leaders can use transformational leadership ideals by setting high expectations for their followers and believing in their ability to deliver. Followers and their personal needs and growth are also important to transformational leaders. As a result, they empower, motivate, and drive subordinates to perform at higher levels than usual.

Last but not least, the researchers suggest that leaders may explore the laissez-faire leadership style, which has a moderate positive association and a significant relationship with employee performance. Leaders may practice this leadership style by giving freedom to their employees to solve any problem in their own way and giving a least supervisory. By doing that, it can further stimulate the creativity of employees in performing a given task and not just rely on the leader when a problem arises.

In conclusion, leaders in Politeknik Mukah may take attention to this academicians' evaluation as a guideline to improve leadership style to be more effective. Future research should be carried out to discover other types of leadership styles that will help develop more on employees' performance especially among academicians in higher academic institutions. In addition, researchers also recommend to study other factors that would affect employees' performance specifically in academicians' context. Attitude, topic competence, teaching approach, personal characteristics, the classroom atmosphere, student relationships, and so on are examples of other relevant elements that future researchers may explore. Lastly, enlarge the sample size, which may include more academicians from other higher academic institutions to increase the research finding generalizability.

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