

# MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE COMMITMENT IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP AND EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE

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## Abstract

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For any organization to accomplish its key goals and survive in the aggressive market, employees' job performance plays a fundamental role (Falola, Osibanjo, & Ojo, 2014). The type of leadership style affects the level of employees' commitment. Besides, employee commitment is extremely important for leaders to keep their workers driven and satisfied (Riaz et al., 2017). This study intends to examine the significance of employee commitment as a mediator in the relationship between transactional leadership style and employee performance among Malaysian construction sector employees. Using the simple random sampling technique, this target population completed a self-administered questionnaire which was assessed using structural equation modelling (SEM) through IBM-SPSS-AMOS 24.0. Resultantly, transactional leadership style proved insignificant in forecasting employee performance while employee commitment substantially affected employee performance. Meanwhile, transactional leadership significantly impacted employee commitment while employee commitment fully mediated the relationship between transactional leadership and employee performance. The research's implications are furthermore reviewed.

**Keywords:** Transactional Leadership, Employee Commitment, Employee Performance, Malaysia, Construction Firms

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Organizations are progressively mindful of the significance of their employees to maintain and gain a competitive advantage (Nielsen et al., 2017).

Thus, the best organizations and the best nations oversee human capital in the most efficient and effective way (Nethmini & Ismail, 2019).

According to Ramli (2018), the accomplishment of the performance of employees is the estuary of all

efforts made by the management for the organization to compete and survive in business against its competitors. There is a strong connection between the contribution of administrators and work performance (Ahmad, Shahzad, Waheed, & Khan, 2014a; Farhani, 2019). Ramli (2018), found that improving worker performance has the option to give progress to the organization and maintain work performance in the progressively complex business rivalry.

The endeavors to acknowledge elite employees require a leader who has proficient administrative aptitudes to realize the executives' functions appropriately. A leader must have the option to guide the subordinates to make a solid effort to improve their execution. Moreover, a leader must have the option to motivate the subordinates to work with devotion to accomplish authoritative objectives efficiently and effectively (Amanah, Hurriyati, Gaffar, Agustini, & Harahap, 2018). Thus, there is a strong connection between the contribution of administrators and work execution (Ahmad et al., 2014a; Farhani, 2019).

Leaders and leadership styles influence the capacity of their organizations to achieve corporate objectives and goals. Consequently, every move made by a leader animates a response from the employees. Hence, the fulfillment of the organizational goals for most businesses is the result of the way that the authority perceives the requirements of the employees and utilizes proper inspirational apparatuses, such as the advancement of employees according to the legitimacy and pertinent aptitude. Likewise, utilizing a proper leadership style energizes the free stream of data between the leader and employees, which prompt enhanced work execution and benefit the organization (Mohammed et al., 2014).

On the whole, output or productivity can be sustained and enhanced through the adequacy of the authority and deft reaction of the employees (Rizwan, Khan, Nadeem, & Abbas, 2016). Employees are increasingly dedicated under a suitable leadership style (Nyengane, 2007; Clark, Hartline, & Jones, 2009; Benggio, 2012; Riaz, Akram, & Ijaz, 2011; Ohemeng, Amoaks-Asiedu, & Darko, 2018).

Commitment is one aim to endure in the course of action. Organizations frequently attempt to support employee commitment to lessen the turnover cost and to accomplish stability (Aniefiok, Vongsinsirikul, Suwandee, & Jabutay, 2018). In other words, organizations utilize commitment with certain expectations of the employees' conduct in terms of emotional attachment, absenteeism, and performance (Agha, Nwekpa, & Eze, 2017).

Subsequently, employee commitment is not just the execution of single parts or units of an organization, but also includes the result of all connections occurring in the organization (Agha et al., 2017). Considering that, the degree of employee commitment can decide the execution of the employee (Ahmad, Iqbal, Javed, & Hamad, 2014b). Besides, it is broadly accepted that committed employees work more earnestly and are probably going to invest more energy in their work to accomplish the hierarchical targets (Aniefiok et al., 2018).

Meanwhile, employees are increasingly committed under a suitable leadership style (Nyengane, 2007; Clark et al., 2009; Benggio, 2012; Riaz et al., 2011); thus, administrators generally scan for a new strategy to build the commitment of their employees since such commitment have positive results for the organization, including lower turnout, improved job execution, and progressively focused organization (Fesharaki & Sehhat, 2018). Employee commitment is a record to show whether an organization grows or not under an administrative style that may be affected by the employees' work satisfaction, empowerment, commitment, and organizational culture (Agha et al., 2017).

Leaders affect the level of employees' commitment. Nonetheless, leaders generally do not have significant knowledge to change their conduct or abilities to motivate their employees (Benggio, 2012). Thus, the kind of leadership style took on impacts employee commitment, and representatives are continuously committed when they are built up by a sensible drive style (Clark et al., 2009; Benggio, 2012; Riaz et al., 2011). While various sorts of leadership styles exist, this investigation looks at the transactional leadership style. Bass (1985) recommends that transactional leadership contains two qualities, management by exception, and the usage of contingent prizes. Bass (1985) further battles that by giving contingent prizes, a leader can bring out involvement, loyalty, and commitment from subordinates. The transactional leader in this way urges representatives to perform to better expectations (Den Hartog, Van Muijen, & Koopman, 1997).

Every year, a huge development fund was spent on the construction industry since it triggers other economic activities. However, the sector itself was still confronted with issues concerning the lack of a qualified workforce that slowed down economic growth ("Malaysia: World Bank development indicators", n.d.). To make matters worse, local employees were also considered by some to be 'lazy' (Jeyacheya & Hampton, 2016; Iqbal & Hameed, 2020). However, 64% of Malaysians were filling high-skill jobs overseas. The government realizes that only 28 percent of the workforce was highly skilled. Thus, 62% of companies in Malaysia still could not find employees with the right skills, even with plenty of job vacancies to go around ("Malaysia: World Bank development indicators", n.d.). As a result, many construction projects were being collapsed, suspended, and there are even occurrences of work closure. The Department of Statistics reported that the construction sector outcome declined from 10.7% in 2016 to -0.6% at the end of 2019 ("Malaysia construction output", n.d.).

The most significant factors that affect low work performance and productivity in construction ventures are inadequate labor, worker shortage (Assaf & Al-Hejji, 2006; Jarkas, Kadri, & Younes, 2012; Bekr, 2016, 2018; Jarkas, 2015; Aziz & Abdel-Hakam, 2016; Al-Rifai & Amoudi, 2016; Bagaya & Song, 2016; Samarah & Bekr, 2016), low work productivity (Aziz & Abdel-Hakam, 2016; Samarah & Bekr, 2016), and lack of supervision (Jarkas et al., 2012; Jarkas & Bitar, 2012; Bekr, 2016; Jarkas, 2015; El-Gohary & Aziz, 2014).

The failure or success of the construction industry significantly depends on the effectiveness of the leadership style (Shahata & Zayed, 2013). Thus, managing the well-being of employees under a proficient leadership style and controlling work exercises from design to construction are fundamental in accomplishing high productivity and performance (Ailabouni, Gidado, & Painting, 2007). According to Rojas and Aramvareekul (2003), the two identified areas that have the best potential to influence the performance of employees are the workforce and management skills. Leadership and managerial styles can be viewed as the main factors that influence the construction industry.

Employees remain as one of the key drivers in the construction industry; the labor costs in most countries involve 30% to 50% of the general undertaking costs (Kazaz, Manisali, & Ulubeyli, 2008; Jarkas & Bitar, 2012).

The construction industry goes through patterns of low and high activities that eventually lead to a critical dependence on temporary employees who commonly exhibit lower performance (Barbosa et al., 2017). Some best practices and organizational needs, at the very least, create committed employees as a core competency of a skilled workforce in order to maximize the work performance and output.

Therefore, the effect of transactional leadership on employee performance should exist. Regardless, the examination of the effect of transactional leadership on employee performance and the mediating role of employee commitment in the Malaysian construction industry has not yet been studied. Accordingly, this research plans to make a hypothetical contribution by reducing this research gap.

To address the aforementioned issues, this paper goals 1) to analyze the effects of transactional leadership on employee performance and employee commitment engaged with construction ventures in Malaysia; and 2) to examine the mediating role of employee commitment in the relationship between transactional leadership and the performance of the employees at construction ventures in Malaysia.

This study develops a framework to address the following research questions:

*RQ1: Does transactional leadership contribute significantly to employee commitment?*

*RQ2: Does employee commitment contribute significantly to employee performance?*

*RQ3: Does transactional leadership contribute significantly to employee performance?*

*RQ4: Does employee commitment mediate the relevance between transactional leadership and employee performance?*

The next Section 2 explains the model and the variables included to build the specific hypotheses. Section 3 highlights the method of analysis and the sample used. Section 4 depicts the results of statistical analyses by testing the overall model and the hypotheses. Section 5 presents the discussion. Finally, the conclusions, the limitations, and the future exploration bearings are highlighted in Section 6.

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

### 2.1. Transactional leadership

Assumably, the transactional leadership theory (Burns, 1978) implies employees' willingness to perform at expected levels by providing rewards for optimal execution and outcomes (Bass & Avolio, 1990).

Transactional leadership is described as the exchange relationship between leaders and their followers (Burns, 1978). Three kinds of transactional leadership have been advanced (Bass & Avolio, 1995). Contingent rewards rely on a trade structure where leaders and employees collaborate towards attaining organizational aims and rewards. For example, company leaders should appropriately justify organizational requirements and offer affirmations amidst objective refinements (Bass & Avolio, 1995). Regarding active management type by exception, leaders consistently monitor employees to identify approved standard deviations and address low organizational performance. Meanwhile, leaders in the passive management type by exception are oblivious to performance complexities until alerted by external parties (Cole & Bedeian, 2007).

### 2.2. Employee commitment

Employee commitment depicts an organizational rapport following workers' deliberation on the expenses incurred when leaving organizations (Becker, 1960). Specifically, Becker (1960) implied that such commitment occurs upon employees' expense-oriented observations upon ceasing their relationship with organizations.

The three employee commitment types are elaborated (Meyer & Allen, 1991) as follows: 1) effective commitment denotes employees' positive link to affection and organizational contribution (Meyer & Allen, 1991), 2) continuance commitment portrays individuals' longing to remain as an organizational member (Mayer & Schoorman, 1992), and 3) normative commitment reflects employees' dedication to remain with the organization and continue working (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Several studies have been conducted on the link between transactional leadership and employee commitment (Nyengane, 2007; Bučiūnienė & Škudienė, 2008; Khan, Hafeez, Risvi, Hasnain, & Mariam, 2012; Baloch, Ali, & Zaman, 2010; Tyssen, Wald, & Heidenreich, 2014; Silva & Mendis, 2017; Mahfouz, 2019; Biza & Irbo, 2020; Puni, Hilton, & Quao, 2021).

For example, Puni et al. (2021) and Mahfouz (2019) exhibited that transactional leadership affects employee commitment. Additionally, Baloch et al. (2010) and Tyssen et al. (2014) found that transactional leadership tremendously affects employee commitment. Moreover, Bučiūnienė and Škudienė (2008) demonstrated that transactional leadership positively influence employees' affective commitment and employees' normative commitment, but insignificantly influence employees' continuance commitment.

The study by Teshome (2013) showed the fundamental and positive outcomes of transactional leadership on a normative commitment to the higher education sector in Addis Ababa City. Meanwhile, Garg and Ramjee (2013) revealed a weak, yet positive, relevance exists between transactional leadership and employees' normative commitment in a study at parastatal companies in South Africa. On the other side, Nyengane (2007) demonstrated transactional leadership as a poor indicator of employees' continuance commitment in a South African electric utility. However, Biza and Irbo (2020) found transactional leadership positively impacts employee commitment, specifically, continuance commitment and normative commitment, while transactional leadership was found not to influence affective commitment in an investigation at Madda Walabu University in Ethiopia. In summary, considering the above clarification, it is conjectured that:

*H1: Transactional leadership has a significant effect on employee commitment.*

### 2.3. Employee performance

Employees represent the fundamental resources of any organization (Nethmini & Ismail, 2019). Boxall and Purcell (2011) and Giri, Nimran, Hamid, and Al-Musadieq (2015) demonstrated that the usage of a highly characterized process to assess the performance of employees assumes a vital job in the smooth operation of an organization. Organizations require their employees who are exceedingly talented and exhibit correct dispositions for the smooth working and improvement of the organizations (Anitha & Kumar, 2016).

According to Gungör (2011), employee performance is defined as a significant job for the organization, and it may be a task that a representative does or does not do. The execution of these employees incorporates the quantity and timeliness of output, the presence at the job, and cooperativeness. It should be noted that the possibility of execution is constrained by the actual organization.

A three-component model (TCM) of employee commitment is used to comprehend the relation between employee commitment and employee performance. According to the TCM, employees experience the three different types of commitment in varying degrees, and it is vital to think about how different types of commitment may interface to the employees' conduct. The three types of commitment are considered as a part of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Furthermore, several examinations have inspected the link between employee commitment and employee performance (Astuti, Hasiholan, & Fathoni, 2019; Beloor, Nanjundeswaraswamy, & Swamy, 2017; Mahfouz, Awang, Muda, & Bahkia, 2020; Rahmayanti, Ardita, & Joeliaty, 2017; Restubog, Bordia, & Tang, 2006; Ribeiro, Gomes, & Kurian, 2018; Marhayani, Musnadi, & Ibrahim, 2019; Uddin, Mahmood, & Fan, 2019; Asmoro, Hamid, & Rasyid, 2020; Digidowiseiso, 2021).

For example, Astuti et al. (2019), Rahmayanti et al. (2017), Mahfouz et al. (2020), Digidowiseiso (2021), found that employee commitment affects

employee performance. Additionally, Uddin et al. (2019) exhibited that employee commitment significantly influences team performance. While, Restubog et al. (2006) and Ribeiro et al. (2018) revealed that employees' affective commitment impacts the performance of employees. However, Meyer and Maltin (2010) have identified that employees' affective commitment positively impacts employee performance. Meanwhile, the continuance commitment found does not influence employee performance. While the results for the employees' normative commitment have been to some extent stingy. Reflecting the above clarification, it is estimated that:

*H2: Employee commitment has a significant effect on employee performance.*

Lately, Different examinations have broken down the association between transactional leadership and the performance of the employees (Saleem, 2015; Saleh, 2017; Khan & Nawaz, 2016; Masa'deh, Obeidat, & Tarhini, 2016; Kalsoom, Khan, & Zubair, 2018; Hoxha, 2019; Raveendran & Gamage, 2019; Wahyuni, Purwandari, & Syah, 2019; Wen, Ho, Kelana, Othman, & Syed, 2019; Donkor & Zhou, 2020; Purwanto, Bernarto, Asbari, Wijayanti, & Hyun, 2020; Siswanto, Masyhuri, Maksum, & Murdiansyah, 2020; Ahmed, Haider, & Alvi, 2021).

For instance, Kalsoom et al. (2018) exhibited that transactional leadership tremendously affects the performance of the employees. Likewise, Khan and Nawaz (2016), Saleh (2017), Wahyuni et al. (2019), Purwanto et al. (2020), and Ahmed et al. (2021) found significant influences of transactional leadership on the performance of the employees. Additionally, Masa'deh et al. (2016) identified that transactional leadership can enhance employee performance and, as a result, improve performance. However, Hoxha (2019) exhibited that transactional leadership was found not significant in predicting employee performance in the telecommunications sector. Similarly, Donkor and Zhou (2020) demonstrated that transactional leadership was found not significant in predicting employee performance in the public sector. Taking everything, considering much of the above thought into the record, the analysts speculate that:

*H3: Transactional leadership has a significant effect on employee performance.*

In addition, further consideration in the study body uncovers that the constructs referenced above have muddled associations with one another, which are mediated indirectly through a third construct. Likewise, by alluding back to the literature review, employee commitment was examined as a mediator (Litte & Dean, 2006; Mahfouz et al., 2020). Combining H1-H3 we propose the fourth hypothesis as:

*H4: Employee commitment mediates the relevance between transactional leadership and employee performance.*

### 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The target population encompassed employees from local construction firms. Particularly, the sampling frame involved registered employees from randomly-selected construction companies to forecast the construct correlations. The structural equation modelling (SEM) in SPSS-AMOS 24.0 was

subsequently employed to address the study hypotheses. However, SmartPLS 3.3.2 software may also be utilized to compute the p-value of every path coefficient.

**3.1. Method of sampling and data collection**

This research implemented a simple random sampling method to select 365 respondents from the previously-mentioned sampling frame, thus fulfilling the parametric statistical analysis requirements. The individuals were required to complete a self-administered questionnaire without time constraints and post the responses to the researcher with self-stamped envelopes. Overall, 286 valid and completed questionnaires were received with a response rate of 78.35%.

**3.2. Measurement of construct**

Transactional leadership items were adapted from Hayward (2005) and Moors (2012), comprising 14 items. Employee commitment items were adapted from Wallace, de Chernatony, and Buil (2013) involving 18 items. Employee performance is measured through planning the work, making efforts, and efficiency of the work, by using 12 items adapted from Tabouli, Habtoor, and Nashief (2016).

**3.3. Pretest and pilot test**

The adapted study tools were reviewed by field experts to ascertain instrument validity and

subsequently modified post-expert feedback. A pilot study was conducted where 107 self-administered questionnaires were posted to randomly-selected respondents for data gathering. The pilot study data catalyzed the exploratory factor analysis technique to examine item usefulness and predict the study constructs (Mahfouz, Awang, & Muda, 2019).

**4. FINDINGS**

**4.1. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA)**

Before assessing the structural model and executing SEM, all measurement models of latent constructs should be examined for unidimensionality, reliability, and validity through CFA. CFA was first performed to validate three second-order constructs (i.e., transactional leadership, employee commitment, and employee performance) before the first-order construct in the model was examined. When approved, these three second-order constructs were simplified into first-order constructs using the item-parceling technique.

Transactional leadership, employee commitment, and employee performance in this study served as a second-order construct with three sub-constructs for each construct (Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 respectively). The fitness indexes for the whole constructs as well as the factor loading for each sub-construct and item are introduced. Using the outcomes in Figure 1, Figure 2, and Figure 3 the reliability and validity of these constructs were examined.

**Figure 1.** CFA for transactional leadership

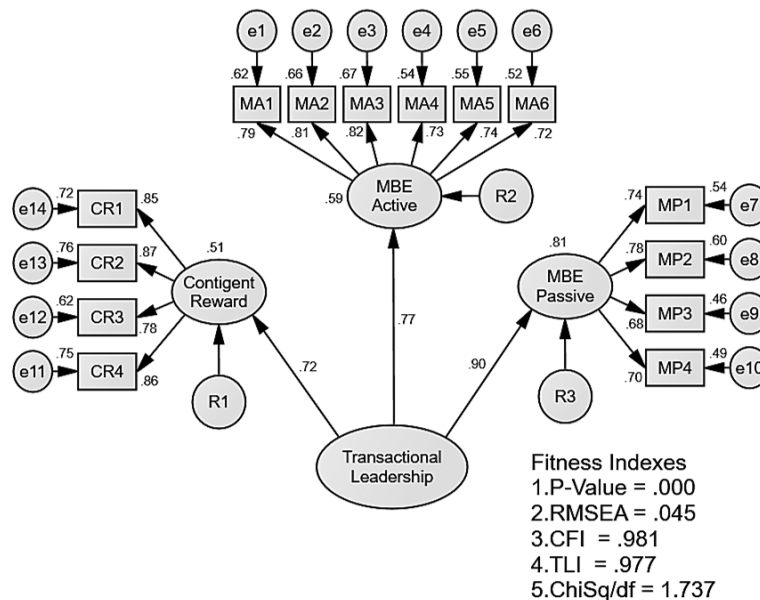


Figure 2. CFA for employee commitment

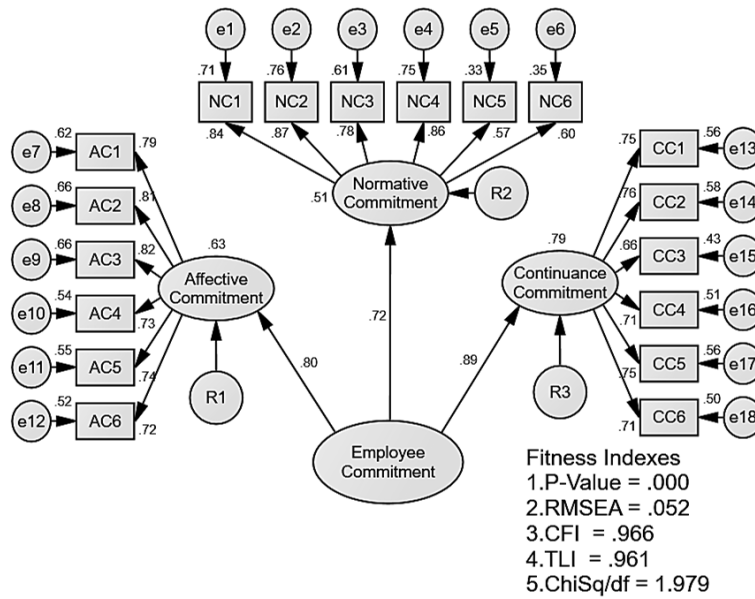
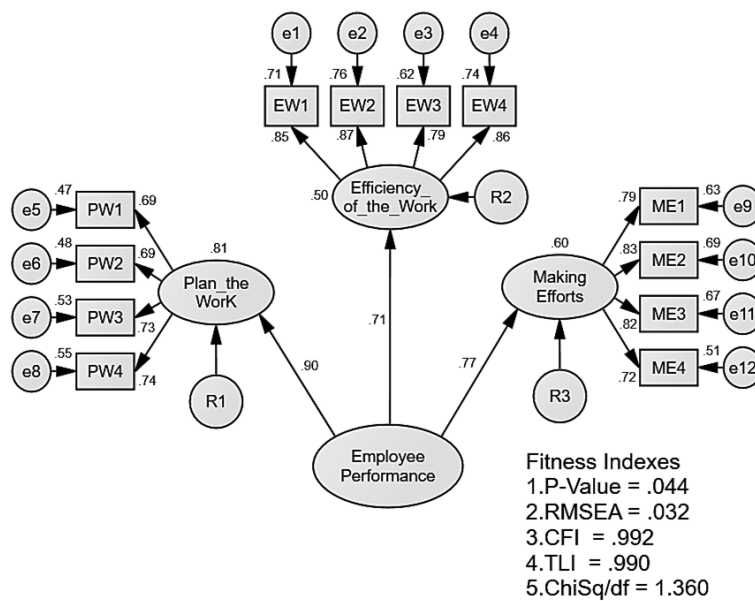


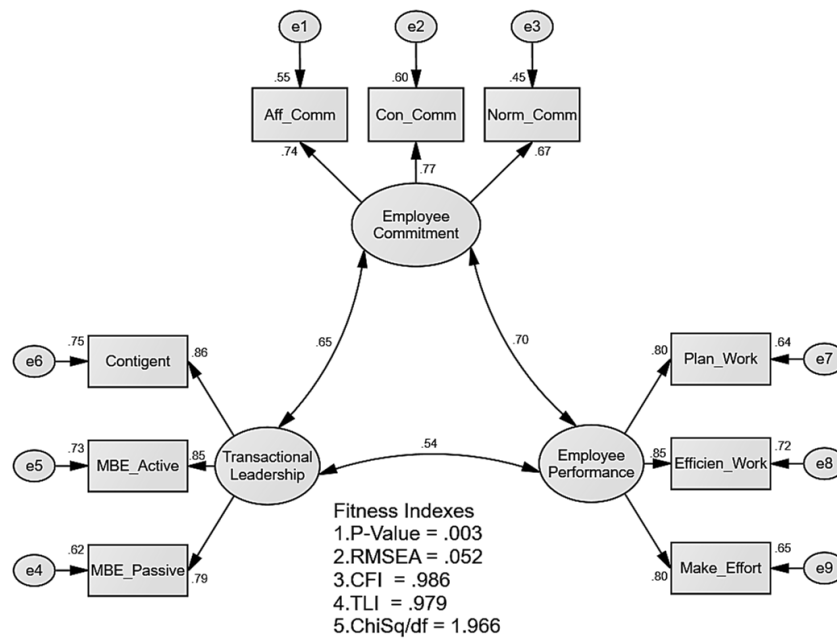
Figure 3. CFA for employee performance



At this point, the simplified first-order constructs were then pooled for the pooled CFA technique (Figure 4). The pooled CFA technique is required to evaluate the discriminant validity of these constructs in the model for the assessment of the structural model in SEM. As shown in Figure 4, the outcomes of fitness indexes met the edge

esteems, with that, the assessment of the measurement model of all latent constructs accomplished the requirements for construct validity. The outcomes of the factor loading for all items is above 0.60, which accomplished the requirements for uni-dimensionality.

Figure 4. The measurement model



As shown in Table 1, all values of average variance extracted (AVE) and composite reliability (CR) were found to surpass their edge estimations of 0.5 and 0.6, respectively. With that, the study reaffirmed adequate convergent validity and CR for all latent constructs.

Table 1. AVE and CR

Variables	Factor loading	AVE	CR
<b>Transactional leadership</b>		<b>0.70</b>	<b>0.87</b>
Contigent	0.86		
MBE_Active	0.85		
MBE_Passive	0.79		
<b>Employee commitment</b>		<b>0.53</b>	<b>0.77</b>
Aff_Comm	0.67		
Con_Comm	0.77		
Norm_Comm	0.74		
<b>Employee performance</b>		<b>0.67</b>	<b>0.86</b>
Plan_Work	0.80		
Efficien_Work	0.85		
Make_Effort	0.80		

The following stage assesses the discriminant validity made through the discriminant validity index summary, as shown in Table 2 the discriminant validity has been accomplished (Awang, Hui, & Zainudin, 2018).

Table 2. The discriminant validity index summary

	TL	EC	EP
TL	<b>0.84</b>		
EC	0.65	<b>0.73</b>	
EP	0.54	0.70	<b>0.82</b>

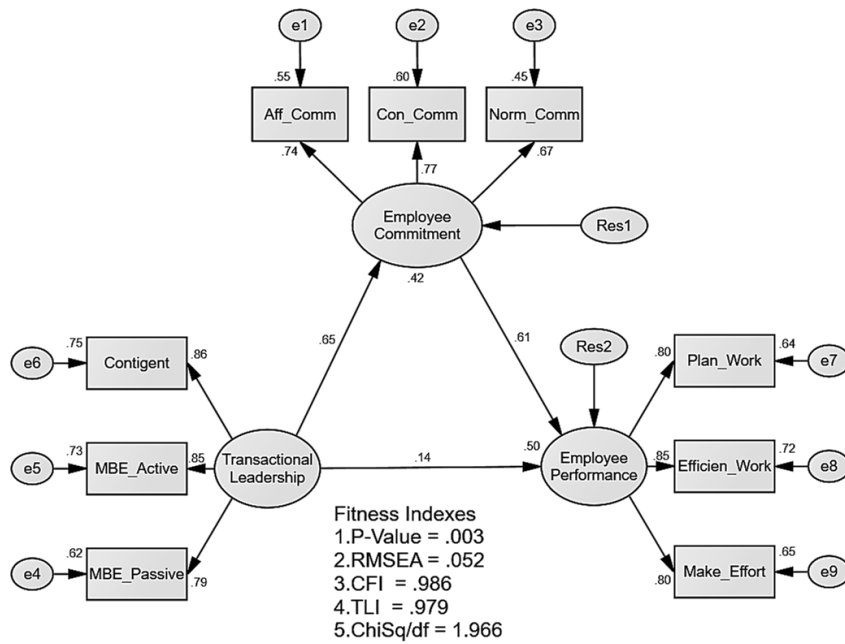
Notes: Transactional leadership (TL), Employee commitment (EC), Employee performance (EP).

The skewness values were within the range of between -0.528 to 0.053 whereas the kurtosis values were within the range of between -0.288 and 0.541. These two measures showed that all data were normally distributed, which met the assumption of utilizing parametric statistical analysis.

4.2. The SEM

Structural modeling and SEM were employed for hypothesis testing. Figure 5 illustrates the graphic SEM output.

Figure 5. The standardized regression path coefficient in the model



The regression path coefficient implications were derived by implementing SEM (see Table 3). As the transactional leadership impact on employee commitment proved to be significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.585, P = 0.001$ ), *H1* was duly supported. Furthermore, the direct effect of employee

commitment on employee performance was significant and positive ( $\beta = 0.647, P = 0.001$ ), hence supporting *H2*. Nevertheless, the transactional leadership impact on employee performance proved insignificant ( $\beta = 0.133, P = 0.064$ ) and did not support *H3*.

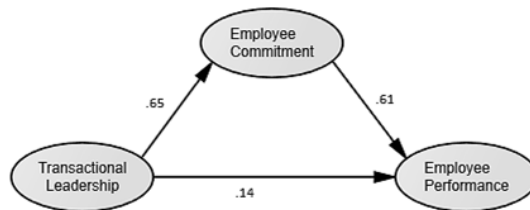
Table 3. The regression path coefficient and its significance

			Std. beta	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Result
EC	←	TL	0.65	0.585	0.061	9.643	0.001	Sig.
EP	←	EC	0.61	0.647	0.094	6.897	0.001	Sig.
EP	←	TL	0.14	0.133	0.072	1.854	0.064	Not sig.

Awang (2015) proposed the bootstrapping technique for the standardized indirect effect in order to reaffirm the presence of the mediation effect. In this study, the maximum likelihood technique, which utilized 1000 bootstrapping

samples with a confidence interval of 95% and a bias-corrected confidence interval of 95%, was employed. Meanwhile, Figure 6 presents the testing protocol while Table 4 demonstrates the bootstrapping outcomes.

Figure 6. The procedure for testing mediator



1. The indirect effect1 A = 0.65 (**significant**)/
2. The indirect effect2 B = 0.61 (**significant**).
3. The direct effect1 C = 0.14 (**not significant**).
4. Thus, the **mediation occurs** since both A and B are significant.
5. The type of mediation is **complete mediation** since the direct effect C is not significant.

Table 4. Confirming the mediation using a bootstrapping

	Two-tailed significant	Result
Standardized direct effect on employee performance	0.915	Not significant
Standardized indirect effect on employee performance	0.041	Significant
Type of mediation	Complete mediation occurred since the direct effect is not significant	



## 5. DISCUSSION

Transactional leadership directly affected employee commitment in line with *H1*. For example, the sample firms that incorporate positive transactional leadership typically reflect high employee commitment parallel to past literature across multiple settings (Nyengane, 2007; Bučiūnienė & Škudienė, 2008; Teshome, 2013; Baloch et al., 2010; Tyssen et al., 2014; Silva & Mendis, 2017; Mahfouz, 2019; Puni et al., 2021).

For instance, Puni et al. (2021) discovered a relevance between transactional leadership and employee commitment in the view of 360 respondents from the aviation sector in Ghana. This outcome agrees with Bučiūnienė & Škudienė (2008), who showed a positive result of transactional leadership on employees' commitment based on a sample of 191 managers at several firms in Lithuania. In addition, Baloch et al. (2010) showed the impact of transactional leadership on employee commitment dependent on a sample of 312 teachers from private colleges in Pakistan. Similarly, Tyssen et al. (2014) indicated a huge significance between transactional leadership and employee commitment to venture work in the view of 124 respondents from Germany, 19 respondents from Austria, and 163 respondents from Switzerland. In this study, *H1* was supported.

Employee commitment explicitly affected employee performance in line with *H2*. As highly-committed Malaysian construction sector employees reflected high work performance following past research (Astuti et al., 2019; Uddin et al., 2019; Mahfouz et al., 2020; Digidowiseiso, 2021), employee commitment significantly influenced employee performance. This study emphasized young Malaysian construction sector employees under 30 years old with 77% of them employed for under six years. Such employees were highly-committed and demonstrated high work performance. The study findings disclosed commitment to be the key determinant of Malaysian construction company employees' high performance, thus supporting *H2*.

The hypothesis on the influence of transactional leadership on employee performance was not supported among the employees of Malaysian construction firms. This specific ruling was found in line with the discoveries of past investigations across different settings, which proposed transactional leadership did not affect the performance of employees (Donkor & Zhou, 2020; Hoxha, 2019). Hoxha (2019) exhibited that transactional leadership was found not significant in predicting employee performance in a study of 333 respondents in the Malaysian telecommunications sector. Similarly, Donkor and Zhou (2020) demonstrated that transactional leadership was found not significant in predicting employee performance in a study of 330 respondents in a public sector in Ghana.

According to Ferry, He, and Yang (2021) the reward such as bonuses are frequently paid once per year before the yearly report comes out and hence are not really tied to organizational performance. Moreover, the bonus-to-salary ratio for some countries' companies like the companies in Thailand and Malaysia is somewhat low contrasted

with the bonus-to-salary ratios for other countries' companies. Besides, labor unions in developed countries offer support for workers to negotiate and bargain for fair rewards dependent on organizational performance. While such practices are not exited by labor unions in some of the developing countries like Malaysia. As a result, those employees have less say in their reward. Accordingly, it is unlikely that transactional leadership affects employee performance through a reward in the construction context in Malaysia. Which explained the insignificant effect of transactional leadership on employee performance.

However, several past studies in various settings supported the relevance between transactional leadership and the performance of employees (Saleem, 2015; Khan & Nawaz, 2016; Saleh, 2017; Kalsoom et al., 2018; Raveendran & Gamage, 2019; Wen et al., 2019; Wahyuni et al., 2019; Purwanto et al., 2020). Nevertheless, transactional leadership is not recommended to influence the performance of employees of Malaysian construction firms, which may be attributed to the diverse target populace in the current study, thus *H3* was rejected.

This research found that employee commitment fully mediated the relationship between transactional leadership and employee performance. This demonstrated that transactional leadership did not exhibit a direct effect on the performance of employees but through employee commitment. Thus, this study found no connection between transactional leadership and employee performance. However, employee commitment was found to play a significant role in mediating this particular relationship, apart from directly affecting the performance of employees itself. The obtained results of the current study reaffirmed the full mediation effect of employee commitment on the relationship between transactional leadership and the performance of employees. In other words, committed employees under transactional leadership are more likely to accomplish their work in a good way.

Because the employees in this study were generally young and in need for a more instructive level in leadership like transactional leadership that can support them to be committed to their work due to their lack of work experience. Considering that, the basic job of transactional leadership in upgrading employee commitment was assumed. Then, those employees were found committed and it was reflected in their performance. In conclusion, in this study transactional leadership did not have the ability to influence the performance of employees directly but through employee commitment first. In other words, committed employees under transactional leadership are more likely to accomplish their work in a good way.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This study examined the mediating effect of employee commitment involving the transactional leadership impact on employee performance among local construction sector employees. Specifically, transactional leadership was significantly associated with employee commitment while employee commitment was substantially related to employee

performance from construction sector viewpoints. The findings implied several intriguing (practical and theoretical) implications. Transactional leadership could facilitate novel and emerging obligations (employee commitment) to influence employee performance while employee commitment potentially optimizes employees' performance (Digdowiseiso, 2021). The empirical outcomes also expanded the current body of knowledge with novel aspects involving the mediation of employee commitment. Notably, transactional leadership could only (implicitly) affect employee performance with employee commitment. Organizations with low transactional leadership would fail to elevate employee commitment and performance.

Even though this examination gives a few theoretical and practical consequences, a few restrictions would give magnificent chances for future contributions to this surge of examination. As the findings could not be generalized globally given the current study focus on the Malaysian construction sector, future studies could assess the transactional leadership-employee performance connection in other countries with a comparable sample. A longitudinal approach could also link transactional leadership and employee performance with a different mediator construct as a cross-sectional exploratory design could imply specific limitations.

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**APPENDIX**

**Table A.1.** The questionnaire

<b>Transactional leadership</b>
My supervisor:
<i>Contingent reward</i>
Provides me with assistance in exchange for my efforts. Discusses in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets. Makes clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved. Expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations.
<i>Management by exception (active)</i>
Brings to my attention the deviations, exceptions, and irregularities from standards from what is expected of me. Is alert for mistakes. Focuses her/his full attention on dealing with mistakes. Focuses her/his full attention on dealing with complaints. Focuses her/his full attention on dealing with failures. Directs my attention toward failures to meet standards.
<i>Management by exception (passive)</i>
Fails to interfere until problems become serious — <i>r</i> . Waits for things to go wrong before taking action — <i>r</i> . Shows that he/she is an organization believer in 'if ain't broke, don't fix it' — <i>r</i> . Demonstrates that problems must become chronic before taking action — <i>r</i> .
<b>Employee commitment</b>
<i>Affective commitment</i>
I am glad to spend the rest of my work with this organization. I feel as if organization's problems are my own. I feel a sense of belonging to my organization. I feel emotionally joined at this organization. I feel like part of the family at my organization. I have a great deal of personal meaning towards the organization.
<i>Continuance commitment</i>
Right now, remaining with my organization is a matter of desire and necessity. It would be difficult for me to leave my organization right now, even if I wanted to. Much of my life would be disrupted if I determined to leave my organization now. I feel that I have few choices to consider for leaving this organization. I am putting much of myself into this firm. I still work in this organization as of the scarcity of available alternatives.
<i>Normative commitment</i>
I feel compulsory to stay with my present employer. Even if it were to my advantage, I feel it would be correct to remain at my organization at present. I would feel please if I remain at my organization at present. This organization merits my loyalty. I would remain at my organization as I have a feeling of obligation to the individuals in it. I owe an extraordinary deal to my organization.
<b>Employee performance</b>
<i>Planning the work</i>
Planning the work before starting its execution contributes to setting the objectives that need to be accomplished. I have the ability to plan my work and its achievement as per the planned schedule. Planning the work before starting its execution gives me a sense of comfort. Planning the work before starting its execution expands my ability to focus on the completion of the work assigned automatically.
<i>Efficiency of the work</i>
I feel ability, dedication, and seriousness to take responsibility. I enjoy professional skill or professionalism and technical knowledge required to carry out the work efficiently. I do my work according to specific procedures and policies. I feel satisfied with the work I do in the organization.
<i>Making efforts</i>
Feeling proud of the work represents a motivation for me to make extra efforts. I have the willingness and desire to work outside official working hours for quick delivery. The organization is enthusiastic about giving extra advantages to workers to motivate them to make more efforts. The organization gives those workers who manage their work tasks well an increase in salaries or wages.

Notes: *r* = reverse item.