

**IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE: A MODERATING ROLE OF GENDER**Omkar Dastane<sup>1</sup>**ABSTRACT**

*The impact of different leadership styles on employee performance was investigated in this study, whereby the proposed styles included transformational leadership, Laissez-Faire leadership, democratic leadership, and autocratic leadership. Concomitantly, the moderating effect of gender between such leadership styles and employee performance was also tested. The required data were collected by utilising a structured questionnaire and disseminating it through an online survey, engaging a sample size of 211 employees of multinational corporations in Malaysia selected using convenient sampling. Accordingly, IBM SPSS 24 was employed to conduct the reliability and normality assessment, while IBM SPSS AMOS 24 application was for the purpose of conducting the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), structural equation modelling (SEM), and moderation analysis. As a result, a positive and significant relationship was found between the transformational, Laissez-Faire, and democratic leadership styles towards employee performance in Malaysia, respectively. Furthermore, the relationship between autocratic leadership and employee performance was statistically insignificant following the hypothesis testing. Meanwhile, the impact of transformational and Laissez-Faire leadership styles on employee performance was fully moderated by gender, whereas the correlation between democratic leadership and employee performance was only partially moderated. In contrast, gender posed a statistically insignificant impact for autocratic leadership and employee performance association. Moreover, the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance was more pronounced in males compared to females. The effect of Laissez-Faire leadership on employee performance is more pronounced in 'female' compared to 'male'. Meanwhile, the effect of democratic leadership on the variable was more pronounced in females compared to males, but with a minimum difference. The managerial implications, limitations, and future research avenues are discussed accordingly.*

**Keywords:** Leadership styles, transformational leadership, Laissez-Faire leadership, democratic leadership, autocratic leadership, gender, moderation analysis, employee performance

**I. INTRODUCTION**

Following the high level of interest shown by many scholars into the topic of leadership and its environment, various leadership theories have emerged (Khan et al., 2012). These conceptualisations are primarily focused on delineating the fundamentals of the different actions and conducts of a leader (Humphreys and Einstein, 2004). Furthermore, organisations have long-since aimed to look for excellent leadership capable of bringing them to success, thereby resulting in the never ending efforts of scholars in distinguishing the manner in which such leaders behave and the consequently varying leadership conceptualisations established over time. In general, Lewin's Leadership Style (1939) has named the three leadership styles of democratic, autocratic and Laissez-Faire (Billig, 2015), whereas "Grid" was then described by Robert Blake and Jane Mouton (Molloy, 1998) in 1964. Meanwhile, Hersey and Blanchard (1969) have thus established the leadership theory currently known as the situational leadership theory (McCleskey, 2014). Following this, the 1970s resulted in the description of the transformational theory by Burns (1978), which emphasised the motivations and values in the process of measurement the manner and approach taken by leaders towards power. This work was further extended by Bass (1985), whereby Bass' transformational leadership theory highlighted the impact of a leader on their followers due to their qualities (Levine, 2000). Therefore, leadership styles and their significance are not obscure; this is proven by the multitude of works previously undertaken on the topic across developed and developing countries alike (Babatunde, 2015; Iqbal et al., 2015; Mohammed et al., 2014; Zumitzavan and Udchachone, 2014). Regardless, Lewin's Leadership Style remains a crucial topic in the context of leadership style evidenced by the different works conducted on it (Bhatti et al., 2012; Khan et al., 2015; Leng et al., 2014; Anbazhagan and Kotur, 2014; Yao et al., 2017; Benjamin, 2015; Kotur and Anbazhagan, 2014). Similarly, studies on the topic specifically

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referring to the Malaysian landscape are also sufficiently many in number (Arham, 2014; Leng et al., 2014; Nasir et al., 2014; Soha et al., 2016).

In the context of Malaysia and its human resource, various criticisms have been highlighted for employees, particularly those hailing governmental agencies, which include: subpar performance, absence of flexibility, ineptitude, subpar accountability, and bureaucracy (Said et al., 2015). In general, the Malaysian leadership landscape and its organisations have been long-since associated with their tendency for hierarchy and relationship, whether governmental or private sector (Ansari et al., 2004). Therefore, this is a matter requiring handling with the use of a suitable leadership style, which is unfortunately implicated by the small amount of domineering styles in the local work culture. The heavily implemented style in Malaysia is authoritative leadership, whereby the leaders are entrusted with power and tasked with setting the laws and regulations, as well as undertaking all decision-makings (Jayasingam and Cheng, 2009). In contrast, multinational organisations in Malaysia also undertake alternative leadership styles as they are led by international human resource members who bring other leadership cultures. Regardless, the manner in which their employees approach such leadership elements and they are reflected in employee performance has yet to be explored.

Malaysian organisations, private entities, and governmental sectors have all been implicated and criticised for sluggish and minimal productivity. The Star (2013) has detailed the manner in which the performance culture is absent in the local workforce, who typically spend half of their work hours with irrelevant undertakings, such as social networking site activities, Internet browsing, extended lunch, cigarette and/or tea breaks, and general office chatter. Furthermore, the issue of minimal productivity may be attributable to the inappropriate leadership style enforced, resulting in employees not perceiving their self-belonging in the organisation. Such wasteful culture should be eliminated, which is something achievable if an organisation's leadership takes charge and drive the entity towards better performance. "Wawasan 2020" was previously detailed following Malaysia's intention of being a high-income and progressive nation. Therefore, domestic organisational productivity is deemed a crucial element for the nation in competing in the global market. The multitude of components impacting employee work performance can be generally linked to an ill-fitting work climate, poor organisational culture, or improper organisational leadership style. Hence, this work aims to assess a leadership style best-fit for improving employee performance in the industries of Malaysia.

Furthermore, a key question has emerged over time: does gender moderate such impact of leadership styles on employee performance? In Malaysia, female employability in multinational companies is currently at par with their male counterparts. Besides, a significant portion of the workforce may prefer a particular leadership style, which may not be suitable for others. Therefore, previous researchers have investigated the impact of leadership styles on the employers of (Small and medium-sized enterprises) SMEs, private organisations, government organisations, and academic institutions, whereas assessments of the same nature in the context of multinational companies remain lacking. Moreover, different studies have delineated the varying types of leadership, while a combination of all four aforementioned types is yet to be described. Similarly, others have researched the role played by leadership genders and the manner in which it moderates employee performance. However, it should be noted that literature detailing the role of employee gender and its moderating effect on leadership styles towards their performance. Thus, this will pose various implications towards adopting an appropriate leadership style for male and female employees accordingly.

This research intends to investigate the impact of various leadership styles on the performance of multinational corporation employees in Malaysia. It will thus shed light on the moderating role of employee gender between the impact of leadership styles and their performance. Therefore, the research objectives are as follows: 1) to investigate the impact of leadership styles on employee performance, and 2) to identify the moderating effect of gender between leadership styles and employee performance. Additionally, the corresponding research questions further query whether leadership style impacts employee performance and to what extent? Similarly, does gender moderate the relationship between leadership styles and employee performance? If so, to what extent?

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Review of Key Theories**

#### **Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership can be referred to the type in which a leader works with their teams concurrently to identify the necessity of change, hence creating a vision towards leading such change. This is achieved by their inspirational influence on their followers, whereby the change is executed together with their team members under their directional guidance. Accordingly, this type of leadership can be commonly found in most of today's leaders

(Maamari and Saheb, 2018). Furthermore, the importance of knowledge regarding the qualities that a transformational leader can bring into an organisation is undeniable as they are relatively strong and able to adapt in different situations. They can also share a collective consciousness, undertake self-management, and be inspirational to their followers when leading a group of employees (Pawar, 2019).

Accordingly, past researchers have claimed that transformational leadership exists when a leader's behaviour influences their followers and inspires their employees towards performing beyond the perceived capabilities. Therefore, such leaders can motivate and lead their followers in order to achieve unexpected results as this type allocates employee autonomy for specific tasks; employee empowerment generally takes place in this case as they are allowed the authority for decision-making following sufficient and effective training (Hasmin, 2019). Besides, transformational leaders typically utilise inspiration and motivation effectively to drive their followers intrinsically and extrinsically, as well as articulate any future expectations clearly (Amirullah, 2018).

Moreover, the ideal influence conferred to the transformational leader is crucial; they act as a dependable role model for their followers and organisation and lead by example to persuade their employees for adhering to their organisational directives (Onsardi and Arkat, 2020). Such leaders have also been considered as an understanding authority who can prioritise their followers' needs and try to satisfy them in order to enhance the work efficiency. Hence, transformational leaders are typically more ethical and very charismatic in the eyes of their followers (Pinck and Sonnentag, 2017).

### **Laissez-Faire Leadership**

This type of leadership can be defined as a delegative leadership in which the leaders are hands-off in nature, while the group members are allowed to make decisions. Each leadership style has their own two sides of the coin, leading to benefits and possible pitfalls accordingly. Therefore, in certain settings and situations, the Laissez-Faire leadership may emerge as the most appropriate leadership style implementable in order to maximise the effect. In general, this leadership style can be characterised by several points, such as requiring minimum guidance from the leaders, while the followers are allocated complete freedom on the decision-making process. Although any tools and resources needed are fully provided by the leaders, the group members are expected to be independent and able to solve the problems by their own. Furthermore, the power and full authority are handed to the followers in complete, whereas the leaders will take responsibility for the decisions and actions carried out (Al-Malki and Juan, 2018).

Moreover, this kind of leadership style necessitates minimum supervision only and works exceptionally well when the leader provides all key information and materials for the project initiation. Under the Laissez-Faire leadership, self-motivated group members will automatically carry out the tasks of their expertise without requiring supervision and tasks assigned by their leaders accordingly as only they are more familiar about their strengths. Therefore, team members who are collectively equipped with professional skills, self-motivated, and capable of working on their own will be able to execute their tasks under minimum guidance (Page et al., 2019). In contrast, among the downsides of Laissez-Faire leadership is the lack of role awareness. For example, certain situations when handled using this particular style leads to a poorly defined roles for the group members. Besides, the task is to be carried out with minimal guidance from the leaders, resulting in their doubts regarding their role in the group and in completing the actual assignment within their own capacities. Furthermore, poor group member involvement is common due to Laissez-Faire leaders often being seen as uninvolved and withdrawn from the rest of them, thereby possibly resulting in the lack of cohesion within the group. Additionally, follower perception of less concerned leaders regarding whatever is happening in the company may cause them to show less care and concern as well, since their leaders have already done similarly (Iqbal et al., 2015).

### **Autocratic leadership**

An autocratic leadership is also otherwise known as authoritarian leadership, which is a leadership style deemed as a controlling type by most individuals. This is attributable to all decision-makings and strategic implementations being made solely by the leader or with little input from the group members. Although this leadership style can kill any sense of creativity among the team members, it is somehow beneficial in some instances, an example being when decisions have to be made quickly without consulting an associated large group of people. A discussion in such circumstances will require meetings, which will have to be arranged according to the schedules of all members and thus deemed too time-consuming for making an urgent decision (Pawar, 2019). Furthermore, certain projects may call for a strong leadership in order to get things done within a shorter time frame and efficiently. For example, incidents happening in a restaurant chain such as customer complaints require the branch manager to assume an autocratic leadership method to solve the problem as soon as possible instead

of consulting with the restaurant's top management. If not attended immediately, the dissatisfaction level shown by the customers will become even higher (Islam, Rahman and Siddiqui, 2018).

Although some cases have shown that the autocratic leadership style can be beneficial in an organisation, similarly many examples indicate that it may be problematic as those who abuse or frequently adopt this style are often termed as bossy. The dictatorial and controlling nature of the leadership style may further lead to the dissatisfaction of employees. After all, a true leader will not force their employees to blindly follow their instructions; rather, they will more listen to the team members' opinions. Moreover, such bossy behaviour can lead to resentment and conflicts among the group members due to autocratic leaders oftentimes making important decisions without consulting their team members. Similarly, the team members may dislike the lack of chance they are given to contribute their ideas, which will also lead to the lack of communication within the team for the strategies implementation; hence, it will be less efficient and effective (Xu et al, 2016).

### **Democratic Leadership**

A democratic leadership may also be referred to as participative leadership, whereby individuals typically considered as unequal according to hierarchical standards are bestowed shared power in the decision-making process (Yang, Zhang and Tsui, 2010). Furthermore, all team members are allocated fair opportunities to participate in idea-generating processes and throughout group discussion and brainstorming; it is noted that the most effective ideas are being voted via the democracy model (Christian, 2018). In general, democratic leaders will encourage their team members to voice out any ideas due to an emphasis on group equality and free-flowing ideas. Nevertheless, the leader will still need to offer guidance and continuously monitor throughout the discourse process to prevent any quarrels and arguments from taking place, especially if more than one party hold different views or perceptions compared to others (Rifaldi, Ramadhini and Usman, 2019). Furthermore, the authority to decide who is in the group or contribute in decision-makings remains vested in the leader. Usually, when arguments or quarrels happen, difficulties to conclude on the decision taken by the team will arise, requiring them to generate a final overview and convince all team members regarding their support of all personal views (Galston, 2018).

Besides, the democratic leadership has been found to be one of the most effective types of leadership style due to higher productivity perceived compared to autocratic leadership. After all, an autocratic leader will devise and position the ideas alone, whereby all the followers are required to do is to follow the directions that they set (Rangus and Cerne, 2017). In contrast, employees are involved in the decision-making process in the context of democratic leadership but their control in the process is maintained and the final say is according to the leader following employee discussion throughout every meeting or brainstorming session (Hunitie, 2017).

### **Leadership and performance**

Literature has underlined leadership as crucial element in the organisational behaviour landscape, whereby it is one of the flexible impacts of individual and organisational interactions (Obiwuru et al., 2011). Its role in generating the outcomes of any projects is undeniably eminent as different leadership styles as identified in research will yield dissimilar results when subjected to various circumstances (Khan et al., 2012). For example, Fry (2003) has delineated leadership's role as a judicious tool in motivating the employees towards accomplishing upgraded growth and development.

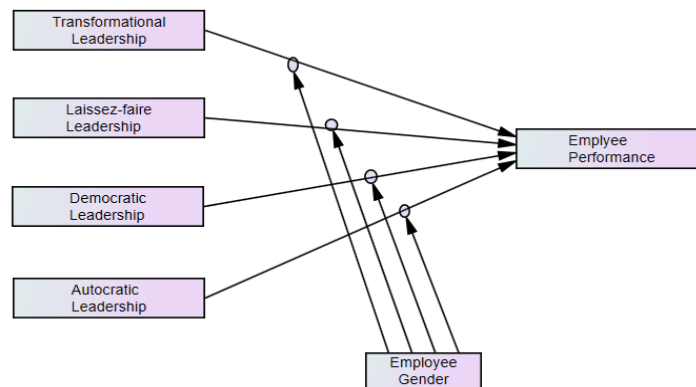
In contrast, organisational performance describes an organisation's capacity to attain specific aims and goals, which include excellent financial outcomes, high organisational profits, and quality products manufacturing via effectual strategic methods (Koontz and Donnell, 1993). In specific conditions, a transactional leadership style can result in an accomplished organisational success despite its followers getting less rights compared to those under the transformational leadership (Boseman, 2008). However, it bestows them with a sense of identity and career satisfaction regardless. Conversely, certain studies have indicated the bigger role played by transformational leadership pertaining to follower performance and creativity in comparison with the transactional leadership (Boerner et al., 2007).

In general, discourses on the correlation between leadership styles and performance are abundant and by different researchers. Prior works have revealed the notable link between leadership styles and organisational performance, whereby differences in styles will further identify the relationship between leadership styles and organisational performance, be it positive or negative (Wang, Shieh and Tang, 2010). In fact, Sun (2002) has juxtaposed the different leadership styles and found influential and positive correlation linking it with employee performance. Therefore, comprehension of leadership impacts on employee performance is crucial due to them being viewed

as key driving forces in order to upgrade organisational performance (Obiwuru et al., 2011). As seen in literature, certain scholars evidently believe that leadership styles can improve the organisational performance while other argue this.

### Conceptual Framework

**Figure (1-1): Conceptual Framework**



**Source:** Researchers Development

### Hypothesis Development – Leadership styles and performance

Transformational leaders typically motivate their followers to be fully aware of their tasks, the resulting outcomes, and their overall importance, thereby inducing the drive to exceed their self-interest for the sake of organisations specifically by achieving the higher needs (Obiwuru et al., 2011). One of the main elements for this type of leadership is its capacity to elevate the leader and following both at the core of such process (Thrash, 2009). Furthermore, Avolio (2007) is in support of the theory that transformational leadership is morally inspiring, which is the quality differentiating it from other leadership styles. This is attributable to the overall theory dictating for the leaders to have the capability for responding to the demands in any circumstances (Northouse, 2007). In fact, leaders functioning using such leadership style must remain vigilant of the environment surrounding, employee abilities, and being flexible in the leadership approach (Bledsoe, 2008). Therefore, the following hypothesis is devised:

H1: Transformational leadership style has a positive and significant impact on employee performance.

In general, the Laissez-Faire leadership style renders the workforce performance to be entirely reliant on the team members' abilities, skills, and expertise (Adler and Reid, 2008). Accordingly, team members are free to make decisions in their own way, while the leaders allocate complete freedom for them to work per their own way and make major decisions (Dhensa-Kahlon and Coyle- Shapiro, 2013). Regardless, certain renowned researchers have stated that the Laissez-Faire style leads to increased job satisfaction and better employee performance, which may be damaging or employees if the team in-charge does not manage their time well or they are not self-motivated to do their work efficiently (Martin et al, 2013). Additionally, this leadership style usually leads to increased chaos within the organisation as every individual believe and perceive as own leader (Monzani et al., 2015). The corresponding hypothesis is developed as follows:

H2: Laissez-Faire leadership style has a positive and significant impact on employee performance.

A democratic leadership typically encourages innovation, teamwork, and creativity, whereby the people often being engaged in projects with such leaders have noted an improved performance and higher job satisfaction and productivity (Verba, 2015). Furthermore, Iqbal et al. (2015) have stated that democratic leaders make no suggestions; they enquire the opinions of others. This type of leadership style thus promotes all team members to participate in the process of making the final decision and develop the entire procedural in order to reach their goals (Trivisonno and Barling, 2016). Moreover, democratic leaders encourage and invite their team members to play a significant role in the final decision-making process, despite the ultimate power is vested in the hands of the leaders. Regardless, they guide the team on what to do and how to get it done, while the employees

communicate their suggestions, experience, and recommendations (Skogstad et al, 2015). Hence, the following hypothesis is devised.

H3: Democratic leadership style has a positive and significant impact on employee performance.

Generally, autocratic leadership represents the crop of leaders who make a decision without first enquiring the agreement of their team members. This is usually applied when a quick decision is required and the team consensus is not crucial for the acquisition of successful results (Boehm et al., 2015). Besides, little opportunity is given to staff and team members to make suggestions in this type of leadership, even if it should be done in the best interest of the team or organisation (Amanchukwu et al., 2015). An autocratic leader mostly makes their decision based on personal judgments and ideations, which rarely include their follower's input, and the leader has an absolute control over the group being led (Zareen et al., 2015). Additionally, according to Iqbal et al. (2015), autocratic leaders oftentimes give orders without explaining the reasons or future intentions. This leads to the development of the following hypothesis:

H4: Autocratic leadership style has a positive and significant impact on employee performance.

### **Hypothesis Development - Gender as a Moderator**

Typically, the dissimilarities observed across the male and female genders are underpinned by gender differences, associated with an extensive circumstance, and observed across different backdrops, rendering its discussion in many fields. Today's society can be delineated using various roles and actions attributed to males and females accordingly, which may differ across cultures and populations. For example, a woman is known as compassionate, gentle, loyal, loving to children, and sensitive to others, whereas males have a desire for upgrades, competitive, domineering and iron-fisted attitude, self-confident, independent and attitude-like, assertive, attentive to money issues, and show dominant materialist inclinations (Collins et al., 2014). Nevertheless, gender associations are seen in a mismatched relationship of power, whereby men dominate different fields of work and social life compared to their female counterparts. Similarly, women often find themselves placed second in business deals in which the values of duties for men are higher than those for women.

A multitude of scholars have delineated empowerment as a terminology to be a highly masculine word to the ear (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1995) and both genders' understanding of "power" is dissimilar. For example, men are more appreciative of the significance and self-efficacy dimensions associated with psychological empowerment (Spreitzer, 1995). Furthermore, meta-analysis outcomes have linked the attributes of men and women and reveal more power for the former show that men have more power than women (Burton, 1993). In contrast, women yield dissimilar experiences and diversity (Budak et al., 1998).

Moreover, a scholar is of the opinion that men have a highly physical perception of themselves and rewards personal accomplishments extensively compared to women (Coakley, 2007). Similarly, Çekmecelioğlu and Keleş (2008) have underlined the significant but negative association linking the meaning and competence dimensions of psychological empowerment and gender. The work further reveals female workers' tendency to perceive their career as highly meaningful, view themselves as competent, and believe in their capacity to accomplish goals. Regardless, a thorough exploration is required to generalise the correlation linking gender and psychological strengthening.

Besides, gender-based problems can impact either gender's work conditions in an organisation issues (Acker, 2005). For instance, male employees are viewed with higher fearlessness, risk-taking, and success-oriented perceptions compared to their female counterparts (Schein, 1973; Diekmann and Eagly, 2000). Such view is also supported by De Vaus and McAllister (1991), which has underlined men's preference for independence and power in the context of work and higher emphasis placed on key career-based problems compared to women, such as liability, venture and responsibility opportunities, and achievements.

Similarly, male employees may also be viewed as highly amenable to the turbulent and driven behaviours of a transformational leader as they may ascribe to any idea or cause revealed and enhance business-based knowledge and motivation. In contrast, female employees are assigned less power and independence in their tasks, thus minimising any career-related judgment problems as opposed to their male counterparts (Kalleberg and Griffin, 1978). Thus, female employees are less susceptible to transformational leadership compared to male employees. In consideration of these theoretical aspects, the following hypotheses are formulated for the purpose of this study:

H5: Gender moderates the impact of transformation leadership on employee performance

H6: Gender moderates the impact of Laissez-Faire leadership on employee performance

H7: Gender moderates the impact of autocratic leadership on employee performance

H8: Gender moderates the impact of democratic leadership on employee performance

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research aimed to examine the impact of leadership style on employee performance, hence resulting in the pairing up of the objectivism perspective and epistemology assumption as the chosen research assumption. Epistemology is related to the assumption used for knowledge in which contribution can be deemed as the acceptable, valid, and legitimate knowledge and how the knowledge is learned by everyone (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Meanwhile, the objectivism perspective is underpinned by research findings and the framework validation is based on the facts and figures of numerous observable phenomena. Validation obtained through these two attributes will enhance the truthfulness of the research and help to shape the research generalisation into knowledge contribution via theoretical and managerial implications.

For a research paradigm equipped with the objectivist and regulation perspectives, the functionalist paradigm was chosen. The regulation perspective required a focus on the needs to regulate the societal and human behaviours, resulting in the establishment of a rational explanation for any observable phenomenon and the attempt to provide recommendations in terms of employee performance. By evaluating all aforementioned criteria, positivism was found to be suitable due to the research philosophy correlating the philosophical stance of a scientist with observable phenomena when producing generalisations. Therefore, this could be achieved via measurable facts and figure along with researcher's observation.

As a positivism researcher, quantitative method is one of the suitable techniques to conduct the research in which its suitability for describing the phenomenon (i.e. employee performance) is apparent, simply by obtaining quantified opinions from the targeted respondents. Furthermore, the element of quantified opinions eases a researcher's task of interpreting, making a comparison, and analysing them through the use of various statistical solutions (Aliaga and Gunderson, 2002). Quantified opinions are usually formed via semi-structured questionnaires, which is adapted or adopted from past researchers. Then, they are interpreted by employing the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software and all data are analysed critically. The use of a quantitative method will allow the researcher to isolate their own beliefs and generate unbiased and objective results, thereby rendering the findings solely based on the facts and figures of a critical analysis.

Moreover, research design is correlated with the compilation of various methodological components used in a research, which acts as a blueprint for data collection and analysis. In this research, the explanatory study design was utilised to examine the current employee performance based on the impact of different leadership styles cultivated in an organisation. It was also helpful in identifying the causal relationship between the impacts of different leadership styles, respectively, towards the employee performance. Therefore, the independent variables in this study were the different leadership styles investigated, namely transformational leadership, democratic leadership, autocratic leadership, and Laissez-Faire leadership, whereas the dependent variable was employee performance.

A few preparations was done before collecting the data for this research. First, the research instrument was designed by adapting previous researchers' efforts in order to ensure the consistency of questionnaire quality, which was then distributed to approximately 10 respondents for pilot testing. The act of pilot testing assured the questionnaires to be error-free and understandable in the context of grammar, vocabulary, and presentation, thereby preventing any misrepresentation of sentences and causing unnecessary confusion. Once the pilot test was conducted, the questionnaire was to be disseminated via online platforms such as Google Form or Qualtrics to ensure a wide range of distribution and convenience in terms of data collection and analysis. Through these online platforms, the respondents engaged would benefit from completing the survey wherever and whenever they want, at their own convenience.

Furthermore, questionnaires distribution was recommended to be distributed evenly in terms of gender density in order to minimise gender bias in the results. Therefore, a non-probability sampling served as the technique used for data collection in this study due to inaccessibility to sampling frame and limited time and resources. The

sampling frame is a list of potential respondents available in the population in which acquiring complete sets of a sampling frame is deemed as difficult due to the Personal Data Protection Act 2010.

In this research, the convenience sampling method was implemented to obtain the opinions of selected respondents, which were thus view as a representation of the entire population. The current research looked into the different leadership styles used in companies located in Klang Valley, which boasted a population of eight million people, thus rendering the convenience sampling method applicable to deal with a vast population. Besides, the sampling method allowed the selection of respondents from different demographic characteristics, such as groups of different genders, ages, monthly income, education levels, and ethnicities. Therefore, the sample size in this research was selected based on the basic rule of thumb and according to the confidence interval (Roscoe, 1975). The confidence level was at 95%, thus requiring between 30 and 500 respondents as the sample size. However, due to resources constraints, the sample size was set at 211 respondents. The questionnaire items are displayed in Table 1.

**Table 1: Questionnaire items**

Variables	Items	References
Transformational Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Idealized influence.</li> <li>2. Inspirational motivation.</li> <li>3. Entertaining new ideas.</li> <li>4. Leading with vision</li> </ol>	Avolio et al., 1999; Chen et al., 2014; Islam et al., 2012
Autocratic Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leader has absolute power over his/her subordinate.</li> <li>2. Subordinates have little power for making suggestions.</li> <li>3. Distrusts his/her subordinates.</li> <li>4. Group members are rarely trusted with decisions or important tasks.</li> </ol>	Anyango,2015; Chaudhary, 2014; Iqbal, et al., 2015; Lumbasi, 2015
Laissez-Faire Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. In complex situations my supervisor allows me to work my problems out on my own way.</li> <li>2. My supervisor stays out of the way as I do my work</li> <li>3. As a rule, my supervisor allows me to appraise my own work.</li> <li>4. My supervisor gives me complete freedom to solve problems on my own.</li> <li>5. In most situations I prefer little input from my supervisor.</li> <li>6. In general my supervisor feels it's best to leave subordinates alone.</li> </ol>	Anyango, 2015; Iqbal, et al., 2015; Chaudhary, 2014
Democratic Leadership	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Advice</li> <li>2. Decision making</li> <li>3. Shared</li> <li>4. Consultation</li> <li>5. Involvement</li> </ol>	Chaudhary, 2014; Iqbal et al., 2015; Lumbasi, 2015; Men, 2010
Employee Performance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. I feel my working performance is good.</li> <li>2. I view my productivity on the job is good.</li> <li>3. I think my performance score in my current position is good.</li> <li>4. The supervisor peer review evaluation of my performance is good.</li> </ol>	Bhatti, et al., 2012; Khan, et al., 2015; Kotur & Anbazhagan, 2014; Sougui, et al., 2016

The survey period ceased when the collected data were deemed sufficient for further analysis. Regardless, a few precautionary steps were taken before data analysis was done to ensure quality findings, such as checking for any survey forms with missing values and assessing their legitimacy. Those with missing values were discarded as the large missing value might affect the results, whereas any unclear and irrelevant answers would render the survey forms as invalid. Lastly, it was advised for the researcher themselves to check the data keyed into the SPSS software so as to avoid any entry errors.

Next, descriptive analyses were primarily utilised to determine the frequency of each characteristic, such as the demographic profile of selected respondents. First, tests for goodness-of-data such as reliability test and normality test were conducted using IBM SPSS 24, followed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and structural equation modelling (SEM) using IBM SPSS AMOS. Moreover, the convergent and divergent validity were assessed before performing SEM, whereas the subsequent moderation analysis was performed by splitting the data according to the moderating variable and followed by an analysis using IBM SPSS AMOS.

#### IV. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

##### Demographic

Table 2 shows that a majority of the respondents (52.1%) are male and mostly Malays (60.2%). The number of respondents according to gender was controlled as a way to minimise gender bias in the research, resulting in the observation that those who promptly replied the survey were mainly Malay. This was followed by Indians (15.6%) and others ethnics (12.3%). Meanwhile, the respondents were mostly of the T20 or high-income group (38.4%) and had a household monthly income range of RM 8,001 and above. This was followed by the low-income group or B40 (19%), with a household monthly income ranging between RM 2,001 and RM 4,000; and the medium-income group or M40 (19%), with a household monthly income ranging between RM 4,001 until RM 6,000.

Besides, a majority of the respondents (42.2%) were aged between 31 until 40 years, namely of generation X, and they (39.8 %) were mostly holding a managerial position level in their company. Most of the respondents (58.3%) were employees of a multinational company, which had over 250 employees in employment. Therefore, this majority was at a higher management level and was in the position of leading their subordinates and being led by a higher management level. As a result, the leadership style might be influenced by the top higher management.

**Table 2: Demographic Profile**

	Characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	Male	110	52.1
	Female	101	47.9
<b>Ethnic</b>	Malay	127	60.2
	Chinese	25	11.8
	Indian	33	15.6
	Others	26	12.3
<b>Monthly Income</b>	RM 2000 or below	21	10
	RM 2001 to RM 4000	40	19
	RM 4001 to RM 6000	40	19
	RM 6001 to RM 8000	29	13.7
	RM 8001 or above	81	38.4
<b>Age</b>	18 or below	1	0.5
	19 to 30	46	21.8
	31 to 40	89	42.2
	41 to 50	45	21.3
	51 or above	30	14.2
<b>Employer Company Size</b>	Micro Enterprise (Less than 10 employees)	19	9
	Small Enterprise (11 until 50 employees)	39	18.5
	Medium Enterprise (51 until 250 employees)	30	14.2
	Multinational Company (251 employees and above)	123	58.3
<b>Employee's Current Position</b>	Junior Executive	40	19
	Senior Executive	31	14.7
	Supervisor	22	10.4
	Assistant Manager	34	16.1
	Manager	84	39.8
<b>Total Respondents</b>		211	100.00

### Reliability

Cronbach's alpha is typically utilised to measure internal consistency and coefficient reliability of questionnaires consisting of multiple questions as emphasised on the Likert scale (Field, 2005). Therefore, the Cronbach's alpha reliability test was thus chosen as the best way to assess the suitability and consistency of the collected data (Trochim et al., 2006). Here, the alpha value increased as the test variable correlations improved, whereby a reliable alpha value was above 0.70 (Kline, 2000). However, an increase in sample size can falsely increase the alpha value, while the lower range devalues the alpha value (Cortina, 1993). Based on Hinton et al. (2004), the alpha score below 0.7 is deemed as moderate to low reliability according the data consistency overview, whereas a score ranging from 0.7 to 0.9 is extremely reliable and a score above 0.9 indicates an excellent reliability. Table 3 below shows the Cronbach's alpha for all variables (i.e. Transformational leadership, Autocratic Leadership, Laissez-Faire Leadership, Democratic Leadership, Employee Performance) is higher than 0.7. Hence, it could be concluded that these variables were reliable and suitable for further analysis.

**Table 3: Reliability Test**

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha
Transformational Leadership	0.902
Laissez-Faire Leadership	0.812
Autocratic Leadership	0.829
Democratic Leadership	0.912
Employee Performance	0.878
Overall Instrument	0.861

### Normality

Normality test is conducted in the SPSS software to determine the target population in which the data collected is shown as a normal distribution considering the probability of independent and dependent variables (Driscoll, Lecky and Crosby, 2000). Furthermore, the D'Agostino K<sup>2</sup> test for all 211 respondents was conducted as the sample size was larger than 50. Table 4 reveals the normality test for all variables in this study, depicting a normal distribution with excellent skewness and kurtosis ranging between -1.0 and +1.0, with a proven symmetric data distribution. According to Hair et al. (2014) and George and Mallery (2010), all variables are deemed as acceptable if the skewness and kurtosis values range between -1.0 and +1.0, which is an excellent rule-of-thumb.

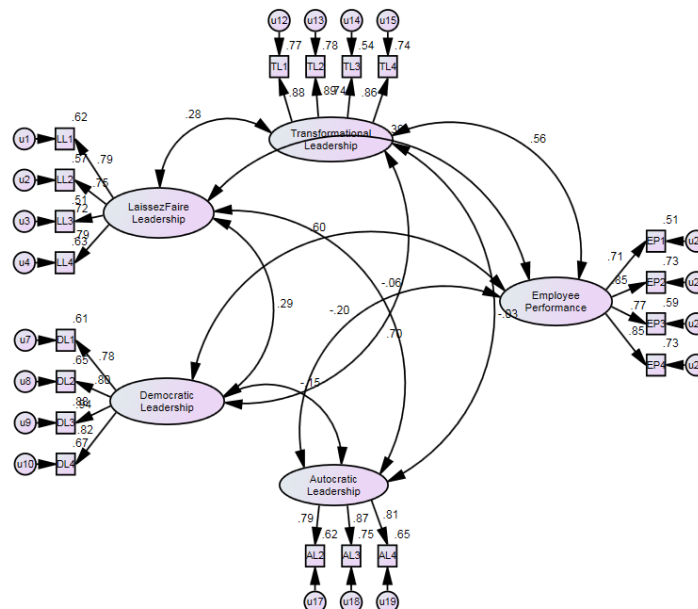
**Table 4: Normality Test**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
TL1	211	1	7	5.77	1.294	-1.21	0.167	1.455	0.333
TL2	211	1	7	5.74	1.314	-1.249	0.167	1.743	0.333
TL3	211	1	7	5.55	1.292	-0.616	0.167	-0.276	0.333
TL4	211	1	7	5.64	1.388	-1.231	0.167	1.569	0.333
AL1	211	1	7	4.97	1.622	-0.608	0.167	-0.448	0.333
AL2	211	1	7	3.72	1.914	0.198	0.167	-1.124	0.333
AL3	211	1	7	3.57	1.867	0.238	0.167	-0.956	0.333
AL4	211	1	7	3.7	1.763	0.238	0.167	-0.843	0.333
LL1	211	1	7	5	1.428	-0.823	0.167	0.646	0.333
LL2	211	1	7	4.73	1.529	-0.456	0.167	-0.423	0.333
LL3	211	1	7	4.91	1.451	-0.749	0.167	0.286	0.333
LL4	211	1	7	5.05	1.514	-0.712	0.167	0.063	0.333
LL5	211	1	7	4.49	1.674	-0.256	0.167	-0.786	0.333
LL6	211	1	7	4	1.713	0.04	0.167	-0.868	0.333
DL1	211	1	7	5.71	1.319	-1.364	0.167	2.081	0.333

DL2	211	1	7	5.46	1.395	-1.054	0.167	0.951	0.333
DL3	211	1	7	5.62	1.386	-1.503	0.167	2.518	0.333
DL4	211	1	7	5.75	1.34	-1.506	0.167	2.444	0.333
DL5	211	1	7	5.52	1.296	-0.912	0.167	0.83	0.333
EP1	211	1	7	5.79	1.031	-0.955	0.167	1.622	0.333
EP2	211	1	7	5.66	1.358	-1.295	0.167	1.634	0.333
EP3	211	1	7	5.62	1.242	-1.3	0.167	2.346	0.333
EP4	211	1	7	5.64	1.135	-1.149	0.167	2.232	0.333
<b>N</b>	<b>211</b>								

### Measurement Model

**Figure (1-2): Measurement Model**



The fitness of the study's measurement model was evaluated across the parameters of absolute fit, incremental fit, and parsimonious fit. To achieve an acceptable absolute fit, the RMSEA value should be lower than 0.080 and the GFI value should be greater than 0.90 (Hair et al., 2014). Therefore, the initial measurement model in this study yielded an acceptable RMSEA value of 0.066, whereas an unacceptable GFI value of 0.851 was obtained. In terms of the incremental fit, all of the values of AGFI, CFI, TLI, and NFI should be greater than 0.90 (Hair et al., 2009). Therefore, this study obtained the initial measurement model with acceptable values of CFI (0.929) and TLI (0.919), while its AGFI (0.813) and NFI (0.865) were lower than the acceptable threshold value. Lastly, the evaluation of a parsimonious fit was based on the value of Chisq/df, which must be less than 3.0 as recommended by Hair et al. (2009). Accordingly, the current measurement model satisfied the parsimonious fit assessment as the Chisq/df (1.928) was below the required threshold value.

After checking for the factor loadings of each factor corresponding to each variable, the factor loading for AL1, LL5, LL6, and DL5 was found to be low (i.e. less than 0.60) and thus less than the stated rule-of-thumb (i.e. 0.6 and above). The items were henceforth deleted from the measurement model (Chin, Gopal, and Salisbury, 1997). Even with a good fit in the model, no precision might be seen and the modification index (MI) could be high as the structure was highly correlated and the lack of discriminant validity on the first run of the model was reduced by freeing up any specific path that was not estimated (Shadfar and Malekmohammadi, 2013). However, none of such redundancy was found after checking the MI values.

To ensure the incremental fit, the factor loadings of each factor were assessed and items with less than 0.6 were deleted individually as recommended by Hair et al. (2009). The adjusted measurement (i.e. second run CFA) is presented in Figure 1. The adjusted model clearly achieved a good absolute fit with an RMSEA value of 0.0058, whereas the parsimonious fit was also attained with a Chisq/df value of 1.695. Additionally, the model achieved an incremental fit with CFI of 0.960, TLI of 0.952, and NFI of 0.909. The AGFI value was 0.859 (i.e. close to 0.9), which would only be accepted if the model achieved a parsimonious fit (Hair et al., 2009).

### Divergent Validity

**Table 5: Divergent Validity**

	TL	AL	LL	DL	EP
TL1	.880				
TL2	.885				
TL3	.736				
TL4	.859				
AL1		deleted			
AL2		.787			
AL3		.865			
AL4		.807			
LL1			.788		
LL2			.752		
LL3			.715		
LL4			.791		
LL5			deleted		
LL6			deleted		
DL1				.781	
DL2				.804	
DL3				.939	
DL4				.820	
DL5				deleted	
EP1					.711
EP2					.854
EP3					.770
EP4					.852

As the total factor loadings for all items were more than 0.6 and all cross-loadings were less than 0.5, the dataset successfully satisfied the discriminant validity of the sample.

### Convergent Validity

The convergent validity for the measurement model was achieved when all AVE values exceeded 0.50, whereas the composite reliability was attained when all CR values exceeded 0.60.

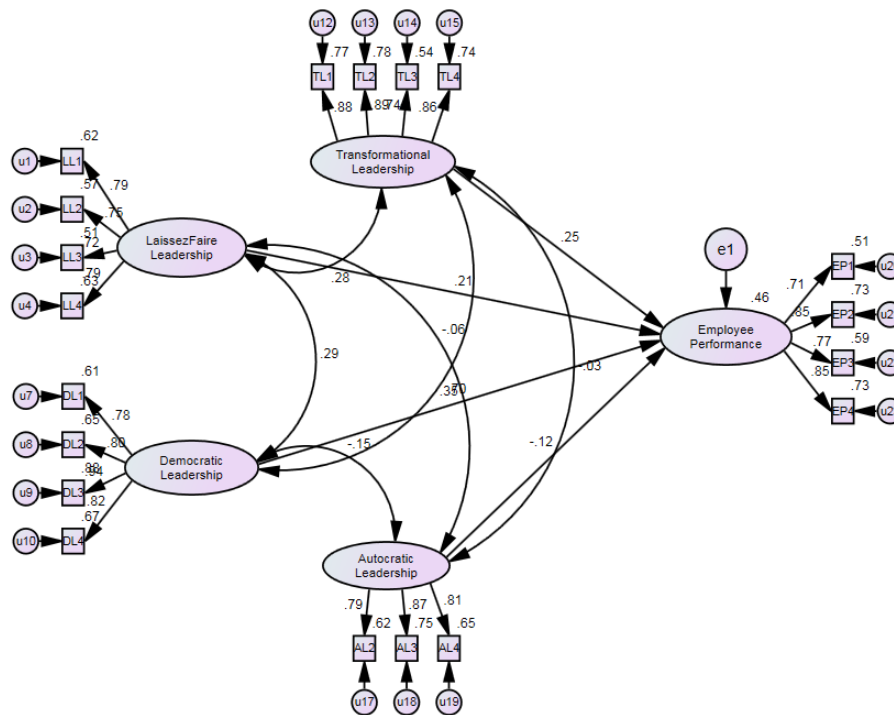
**Table 6: Convergent Validity**

Construct	Item	Factor Loading	CR (minimum 0.6)	AVE (Minimum 0.5)
TL	TL1	.880	0.907	0.709
	TL2	.885		
	TL3	.736		
	TL4	.859		
AL	AL1	Deleted	.860	0.672
	AL2	.787		
	AL3	.865		
	AL4	.807		
LL	LL1	.788	.847	0.580
	LL2	.752		
	LL3	.715		
	LL4	.791		

	LL5	Deleted		
	LL6	Deleted		
DL	DL1	.781	.904	0.702
	DL2	.804		
	DL3	.939		
	DL4	.820		
	DL5	Deleted		
EP	EP1	.711	.875	0.638
	EP2	.854		
	EP3	.770		
	EP4	.852		

**Structural Model**

**Figure (1-3): Structural Model**



The direct impact of leadership styles on employee performance was assessed through the structural model. Therefore, the model was considered to be a good fit as it achieved absolute fit (RMEA = 0.058, GFI = 0.895) and incremental fit (CFI = 0.6, TLI = 0.952, NFI = 0.909) both.

**Comparison of Factor Loading**

A comparison of factor loadings obtained from the CFA and SEM models is an alternative way to measure the validity of the SEM model, which is only applicable if the factor loadings for both models are very close (Hair et al., 2009). Table 9 indicates that both models have the same factor loading and the models are thus validated as having a good fit.

**Table 7: Factor Loading Comparison**

Construct	Indicator	Measurement Model (From CFA output)	Structural Model (from SEM output)
TL	TL1	.880	.880
	TL2	.885	.885
	TL3	.736	.736
	TL4	.859	.859
AL	AL1	deleted	deleted
	AL2	.787	.787
	AL3	.865	.865

	AL4	.807	.807
LL	LL1	.788	.788
	LL2	.752	.752
	LL3	.715	.715
	LL4	.791	.791
	LL5	deleted	deleted
	LL6	deleted	deleted
DL	DL1	.781	.781
	DL2	.804	.804
	DL3	.939	.939
	DL4	.820	.820
	DL5	deleted	deleted
EP	EP1	.711	.711
	EP2	.854	.854
	EP3	.770	.770
	EP4	.852	.852

### Hypothesis Testing

**Table 8: Hypothesis testing results**

	Independent Variables		Dependent Variable	Standards Regression	P	Comment
<b>H1</b>	Transformational Leadership	→	Employee Performance	0.249	.008	Significant
<b>H2</b>	Laissez Faire Leadership	→	Employee Performance	0.211	.002	Significant
<b>H3</b>	Democratic Leadership	→	Employee Performance	0.351	***	Significant
<b>H4</b>	Autocratic Leadership	→	Employee Performance	-0.122	.057	Not Significant

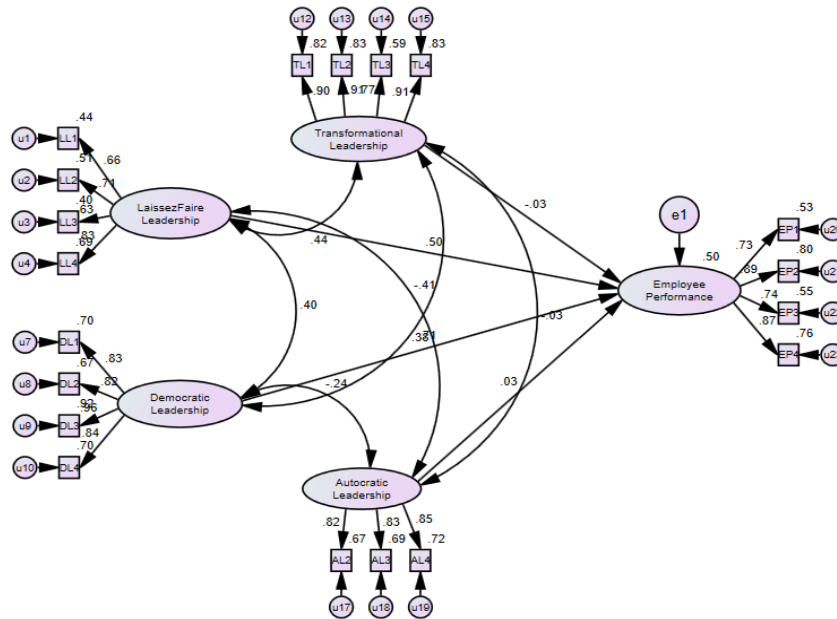
Table 8 reveals that hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 are supported and validated as the leadership styles (i.e. Transformational, Laissez-Faire, and Democratic) have a significant and positive impact on employee performance ( $\beta = 0.249$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ;  $\beta = 0.211$ ,  $p < 0.005$ ; and  $\beta = 0.351$ ,  $p < 0.005$ , respectively). Furthermore, the beta ( $\beta$ ) coefficient was positive and statistically significant. However, H4 was rejected as autocratic leadership yielded a negative and insignificant impact on employee performance ( $\beta = -0.122$ ,  $p > 0.005$ ).

The results indicate that democratic leadership has a positive and significant impact on employee performance, which supports Iqbal et al.'s (2015) opinion that under the influence of such leadership, the employees have discretionary power to undertake their work to a certain extent, thus leading to a better performance. In contrast, the negative but significant impact of autocratic leadership on employee performance obtained in this work is in line with Jayasingam and Cheng's (2009) opinion stating that such leaders dominate all actions and decisions, while restricting the employee innovativeness and creativity. Meanwhile, the results show that Laissez-Faire leadership has a positive and significant impact on employee performance, paralleling Sougui et al.'s (2016) argument that such leaders allow infinite freedom for the employees to do their work, leaving them to perform with no leadership barriers.

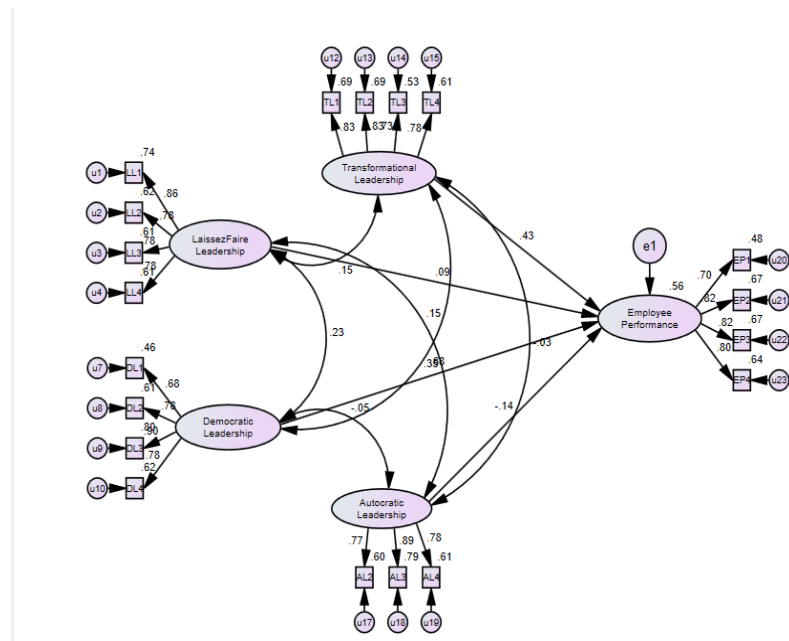
### Moderation Analysis

First, the data set was sorted based on respondent gender and saved in two separate files, whereby data 1 indicated the female group and data 2 renamed as the male group. Then, a parameter constraint was placed on the selected path to be equal to 1 as shown in the figure 6 and figure 7, thus rendering the model renamed as the constrained model. Next, the same model is used but the parameter constraint is removed as shown in the figure 4 and figure 5, thus renamed as the unconstrained model. Therefore, two models were to be assessed, namely the constrained and unconstrained models. Following this, an estimate was obtained for both models using the first data set (female).

**Figure (1-4):** Structural Model - Unconstrained Model – ‘Female’ data set

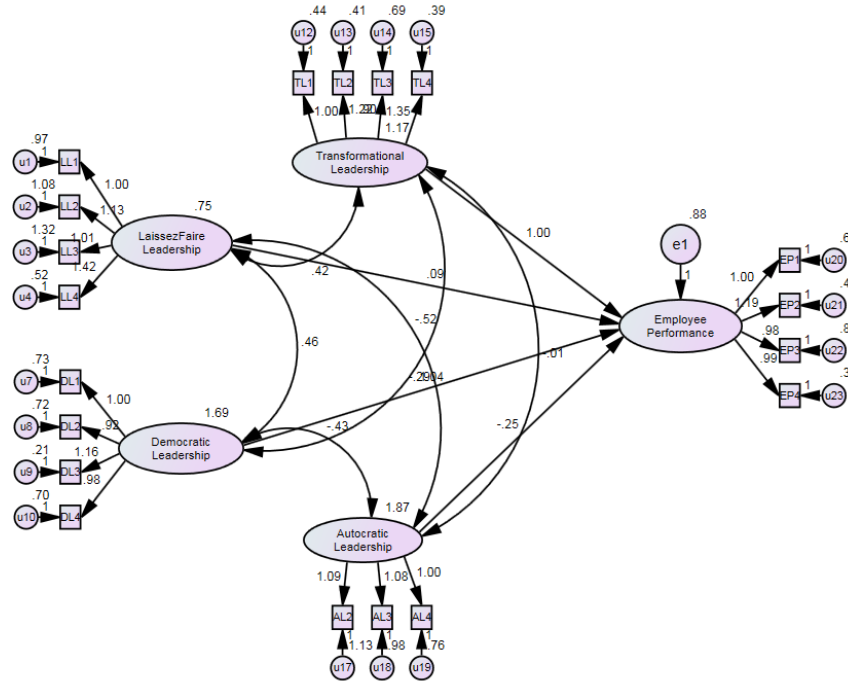


**Figure (1-5):** Structural Model - Unconstrained Model – ‘male’ data set

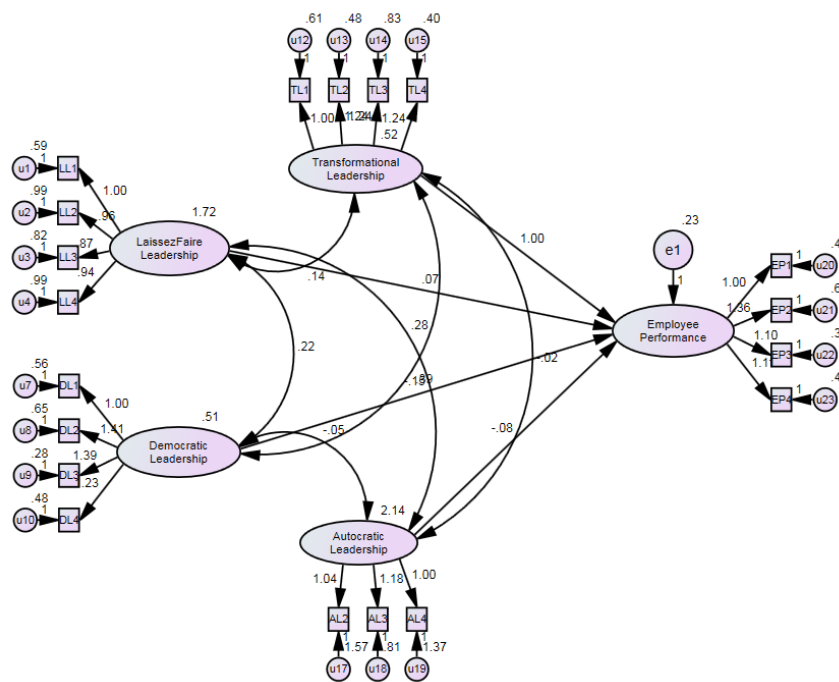


**Moderation Analysis for Variable Transformational Leadership**

**Figure (1-6): Structural Model - Constrained Model – ‘Female’ data set**



**Figure (1-7): Structural Model Constrained Model – ‘male’ data set**



**Table 9 a – The moderation test for female respondent group**

	Unconstrained Model	Constrained Model	Chi-Square Difference	Results on Moderation	Results on Hypothesis
Chi-Square	300.281	360.721	60.44	Significant	Supported
DF	142	143	1		

**Table 9 b – The moderation test for male respondent group**

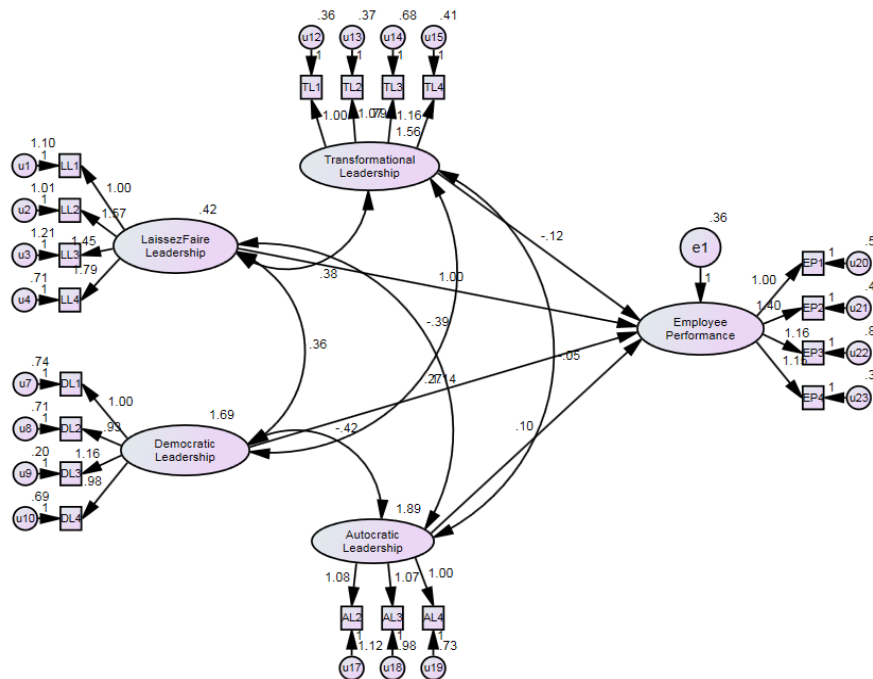
	Unconstrained Model	Constrained Model	Chi-Square Difference	Results on Moderation	Results on Hypothesis
Chi-Square	215.358	243.632	28.274	Significant	Supported
DF	142	143	1		

The procedure for testing the moderator (i.e. female) is carried out as shown in Table 1a. First, for transformational leadership, the difference in Chi-square value was 60.44 (360.721-300.281), while the difference in the degree of freedom was 1 (143 - 142). For the test to be significant, the difference in Chi-square value must be higher than 3.84, with a difference in the value of the degree of freedom (i.e. 1).

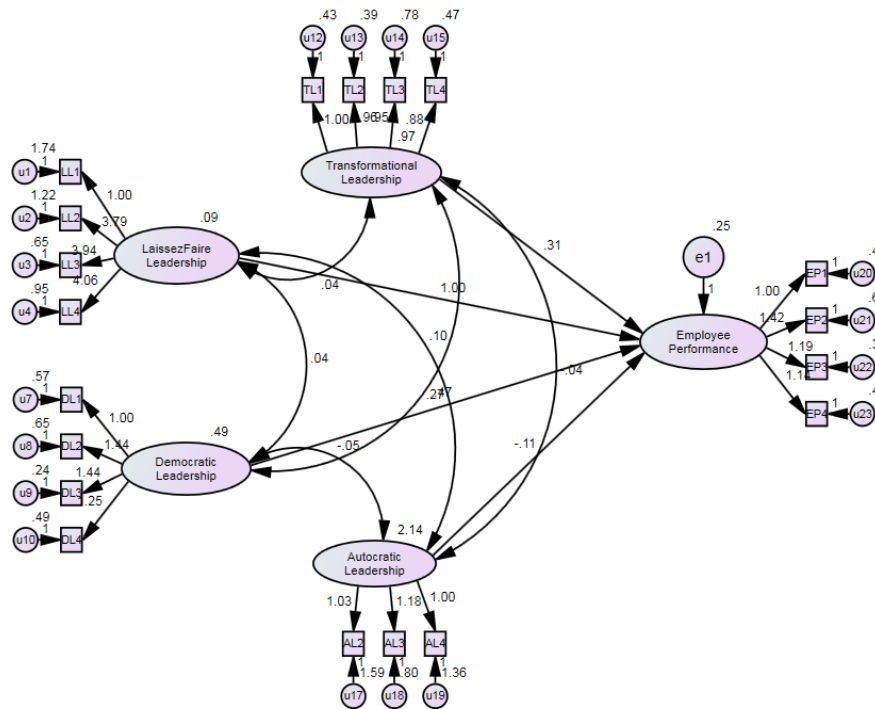
Then, testing the moderation for the same variable (i.e. gender) using another data set (i.e. male) is carried out as shown in Table 1b. The hypothesis testing should produce the same results but the moderation was significant since the difference in Chi-square value between the constrained and unconstrained model was more than 3.84. Furthermore, the difference in Chi-square value was 28.274 (243.632 - 215.358), while the difference in the degree of freedom was 143-142 = 1. Accordingly, the hypothesis testing for moderation carried out found that the moderator variable gender did moderate the causal effect of transformational leadership on employee performance.

**Moderation Analysis for Variable Laissez-Faire Leadership**

**Figure (1-8): Structural Model - Constrained Model – ‘Female’ data set**



**Figure (1-9):** Structural Model - Constrained Model – ‘male’ data set



**Table 10 a – The moderation test for female respondent group**

	Unconstrained Model	Constrained Model	Chi-Square Difference	Results on Moderation	Results on Hypothesis
Chi-Square	300.281	307.500	7.219	Significant	Supported
DF	142	143	1		

**Table 10 b – The moderation test for male respondent group**

	Unconstrained Model	Constrained Model	Chi-Square Difference	Results on Moderation	Results on Hypothesis
Chi-Square	215.358	297.728	82.37	Significant	Supported
DF	142	143	1		

The procedure for testing the moderator (i.e. female) is carried out as shown in Table 1a. Here, the Laissez-Faire leadership yielded the difference in Chi-square value of 7.219 (307.500 – 300.281), while the difference in the degree of freedom was 1 (143 - 142). For the test to be significant, the difference in Chi-square value must be higher than 3.84, with a difference in the value of the degree of freedom (i.e. 1).

Then, testing the moderation for the same variable (i.e. gender) using another data set (i.e. male) is carried out as shown in Table 1b. The hypothesis testing should produce the same results in which the moderation was significant due to the difference in Chi-square value between the constrained and unconstrained model was more than 3.84. Therefore, the difference in Chi-square value was 82.37 (297.728- 215.358), while the difference in the degrees of freedom is 143-142 = 1. Therefore, hypothesis testing for moderation carried out found that the moderator’s variable gender did moderate the causal effect of Laissez-Faire leadership on employee performance.

**Moderation Analysis for Variable Democratic Leadership**

Figure (1-10): Structural Model - Constrained Model – ‘Female’ data set

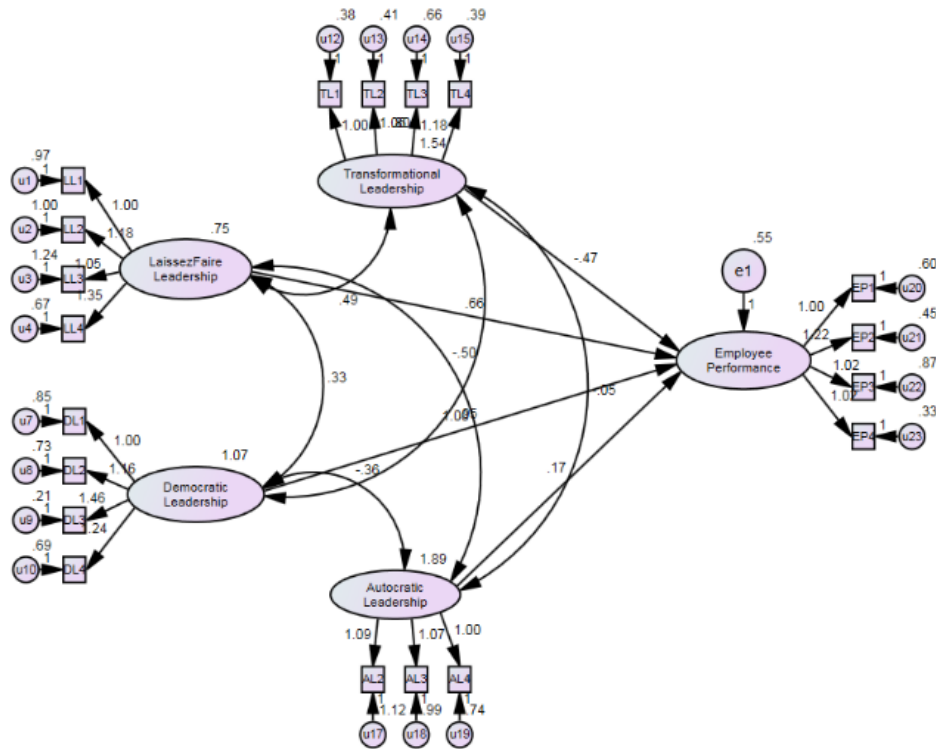
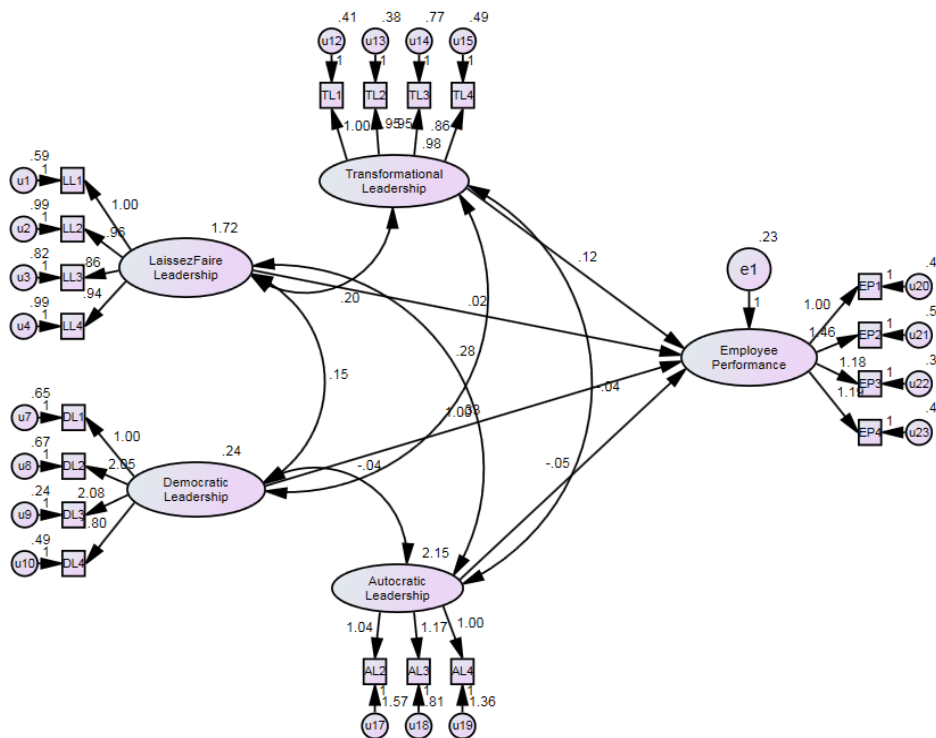


Figure (1-11): Structural Model - Constrained Model – ‘male’ data set



**Table 11 a – The moderation test for female respondent group**

	Unconstrained Model	Constrained Model	Chi-Square Difference	Results on Moderation	Results on Hypothesis
Chi-Square	300.281	334.485	34.204	Significant	Supported
DF	142	143	1		

**Table 11 b – The moderation test for male respondent group**

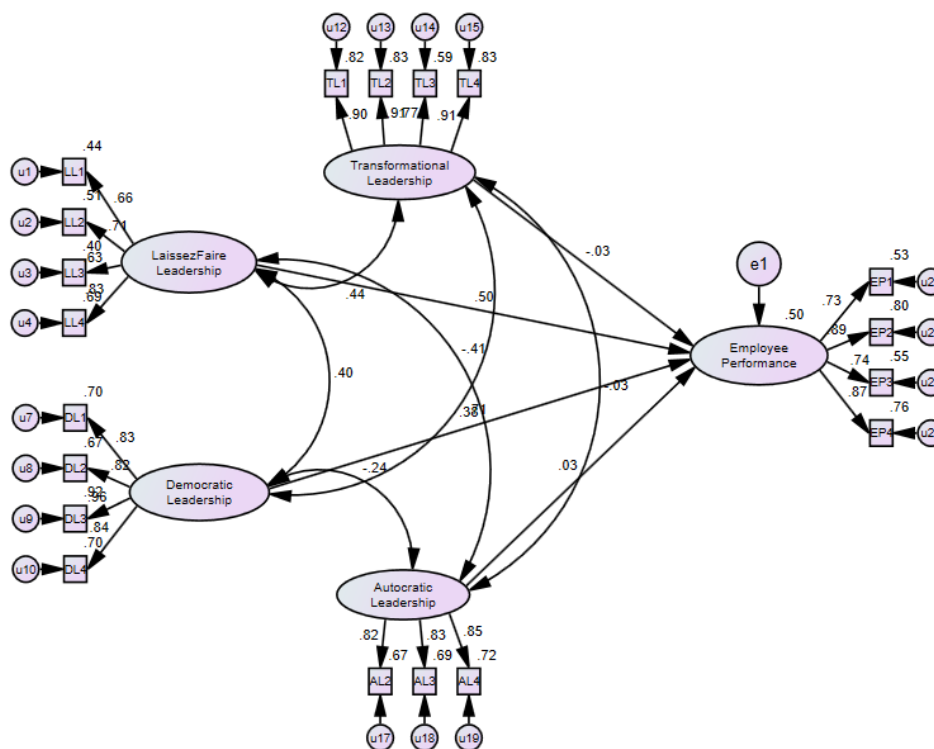
	Unconstrained Model	Constrained Model	Chi-Square Difference	Results on Moderation	Results on Hypothesis
Chi-Square	215.358	231.859	16.501	Significant	Supported
DF	142	143	1		

The procedure for testing the moderator (i.e. female) is carried out as shown in Table 1a. For democratic leadership, the difference in Chi-square value was 34.204 (334.485 – 300.281) and the difference in the degree of freedom was 1 (143 - 142). For the test to be significant, the difference in Chi-square value must be higher than 3.84, with a difference in the value of the degree of freedom (i.e. 1).

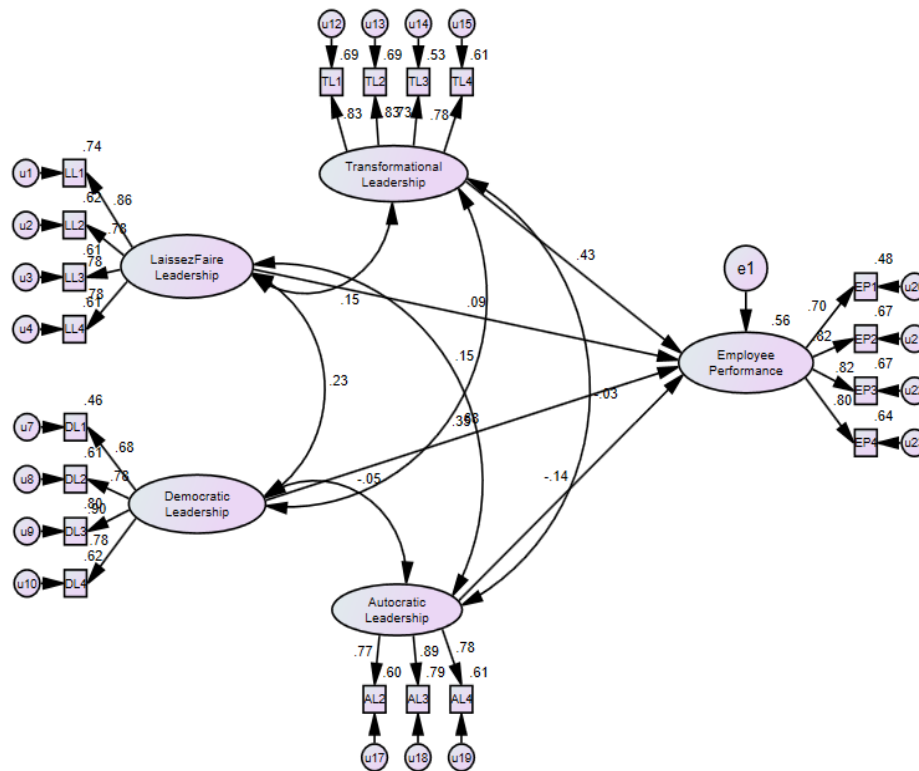
Then, testing the moderation for the same variable (i.e. gender) using another data set (i.e. male) is carried out as shown in Table 1b. The hypothesis testing should produce the same results in which the moderation was significant due to the difference in Chi-square value between the constrained and unconstrained model was more than 3.84. Here, the difference in Chi-square value was 16.501 (231.859- 215.358), while the difference in the degrees of freedom was 143-142 = 1. The hypothesis testing for moderation carried out found that the moderator variable gender did moderate the causal effect of democratic leadership on employee performance.

In contrast, autocratic leadership yielded no significant impact on employee performance in this study; hence, moderation analysis was not carried out for this variable. Additionally, in which group does the effect of moderator variable appears as more pronounced? To address this question, standardised estimates for the path of interest for both datasets were required. The procedure is demonstrated in the following figure.

**Figure (1-12): Structural Model - Unconstrained Model – ‘Female’ data set**



**Figure (1-13):** Structural Model - Unconstrained Model – ‘male’ data set



**Table 12: Hypothesis testing results**

Leadership Style	Female	P	Remarks	Male	P	Decision
Transformational Leadership	-0.27	.846	Not Significant	0.427	.001	Significant
LaissezFaire Leadership	0.496	***	Significant	0.091	.286	Not Significant
Democratic Leadership	0.385	.006	Significant	0.349	.008	Significant
Autocratic Leadership	0.034	.749	Not Significant	-0.139	.109	Not Significant

For variable 1 (i.e. transformational leadership), the standardised parameter estimate for the ‘female’ group was -0.27 while the ‘male’ group obtained 0.427. Thus, one can conclude that the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance is more pronounced in males compared to females. Now, the type of moderation occurred in the relationship should be investigated, whereby the results showed that the type of moderation was full moderation. This is due to the standardised estimate for ‘female’ deemed as not significant, while the standardised estimate for the males is significant.

For variable 2 (i.e. Laissez-Faire leadership), the standardised parameter estimate for ‘female’ group was 0.496 while the same estimate for the ‘male’ group was 0.091. Thus, one can conclude that the effect of Laissez-Faire leadership on employee performance is more pronounced in females compared to males. Now, the type of moderation occurred in the relationship should be investigated, whereby the results showed that the type of moderation was full moderation. This is attributable to the significant standardised estimate for the female being perceived as significant, while the standardised estimate for the male was not significant.

For variable 3 (i.e. democratic leadership), the standardised parameter estimate for ‘female’ group was 0.385 while the same estimate for the ‘male’ group was 0.349. Thus, one can conclude that the effect of democratic leadership on employee performance is more pronounced in ‘female’ compared to ‘male’. Now, the type of moderation occurred in the relationship should be investigated, whereby the results showed that the type of moderation was partial moderation since the standardised estimate for female and male both was significant.

For variable 4 (i.e. autocratic leadership), the standardised parameter estimate for 'female' and 'male' groups was statistically insignificant to establish any relationship among the variables, including the moderating effect.

## V. CONCLUSION

The primary goal of this research was to examine the impact of transformational, Laissez-Faire, democratic, and autocratic leadership styles on employee performance. Besides, the study intended to identify the moderating role of gender among the impact of leadership styles and employee performance. Accordingly, the findings revealed a positive and significant relationship between the transformational, Laissez-Faire, and democratic leadership towards employee performance in Malaysia, while the correlation between autocratic leadership and employee performance was statistically insignificant.

The impact of transformational and Laissez-Faire leadership styles on employee performance was fully moderated by gender, respectively, whereas the impact of democratic leadership is partially moderated by the variable. However, the moderating effect of gender onto the impact of autocratic leadership and employee performance was statistically insignificant, rendering the effects of transformational leadership on employee performance more pronounced in 'male' compared to 'female'. Additionally, the effect of Laissez-Faire leadership on employee performance was more pronounced in 'female' compared to 'male'. The effect of democratic leadership on employee performance is more pronounced in 'female' compared to 'male' but with a minimum difference.

This study successfully shed light on which leadership style, in particular, would impact employee performance in the context of Malaysian multinational corporation industry, highlighting the moderating role of employee gender. Furthermore, earlier studies have investigated the moderating role of leader gender but this study uncovered the manner in which different leadership styles would impact employee performance based on employee gender.

Therefore, this study provided guidelines for managers in multinational organisations towards adopting effective and effectual leadership characteristics in managing organisational members or project teams for greater performance based on employee gender. Here, the project performance can be significantly improved if its project managers are encouraged, trained, and developed with the relevant leadership skills. Hence, harnessing the appropriate leadership characteristics among managers based on the employee gender would be one of the main organisational strategies for success.

This research offers several managerial implications. For one, organisations must be led by leadership with highly competent personality in ensuring the employees are sufficiently guided in their daily operations and towards achieving the organisational goals. This work shows that the democratic leadership style poses an effect of more significance compared to Laissez-Faire and transformational styles in the context of employee performance. Staying competitive in the current business climate requires the identification of the right and highly capable leader, particularly in the Malaysian private sector.

Furthermore, Malaysia-based organisations should adhere to the recommended adoption of the democratic leadership as opposed to other leadership styles as employees are known as the most instrumental asset in such organisation. Their performance is highly reliant upon the leadership style, thus rendering organisations led by a highly capable leadership can yield an improved performance. Hence, the leadership style should be prioritised, especially due to the moderator analysis in this study showing that organisations employing more females will fare better under the Laissez-Faire leadership while those more male-oriented may turn to transformational leadership.

In spite of its voluminous contributions, this study is not without its limitations, thus allowing potential indications for future research. First, a Malaysian-based sample size is used, which may thus restrict the findings' generalisability (Pellegrini and Scandura, 2008) and rendering it recommended for future studies to substantiate these findings across dissimilar culture settings. Second, the results of this study is underpinned by multinational company employees as the foundation, rendering its generalisability for alternative work settings as potentially unsuitable. Moreover, precise circumstances such as uncertainties (Rast et al., 2013) and low economic generosity (Huang, 2015) have been found to potentially upgrade the effectiveness of authoritarian leadership as shown in prior works. Therefore, future attempts in extending this work across other kinds of industries (e.g. manufacturing or service settings) may be well-deserved.

In addition, novel directions for future works are multiple and as follows: first, they can use this work as a foundation in assessing the manner in which leadership styles impact other employee outcomes in detail. For instance, assessing whether leadership may benefit the employees towards improving their career focus and engagement may be worthwhile. Second, this study assesses the moderating role of employee gender; however, future studies may push the envelope and extend the range of possible mediators, such as considering alternative self-related constructs like core self-evaluation (Kacmar et al., 2009) and self-esteem (Chan et al., 2013). Additionally, future research may look into the inclusion of alternative contextual factors to aid the delineation of inconsistent findings obtained in leadership literature thus far. For instance, leadership impacts on their subordinates may be further influenced by leader attributes (e.g. leader integrity) or situational attributes (e.g. organisational justice).

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