

Bridging Leadership and Communication: Examining the Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance in Government-Linked Companies

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Abstract

This conceptual study examines how employee performance, strategic communication, and adaptive leadership style interact, using job satisfaction as a mediating variable. The study builds a framework that explains how adaptive leadership and effective communication enhance job satisfaction and performance, drawing on Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) and Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory. Within the context of Malaysian Government-Linked Companies (GLCs), the study proposes that job satisfaction mediates the relationships between adaptive leadership style and strategic communication (independent variables) and employee performance (dependent variable). The study fills gaps in the literature, particularly the lack of attention to GLCs in Malaysia and the incomplete integration of these theories. By examining this environment, the study offers insights relevant to global organizational processes while providing a localized perspective. According to the proposed framework, job satisfaction mediates the relationship between leadership style, strategic communication, and employee performance. The framework suggests that leaders can enhance job satisfaction and employee performance by adapting their leadership approaches and cultivating strong relationships with employees. Similarly, strategic communication ensures that employee engagement aligns with organizational goals. This study makes theoretical contributions by integrating well-established leadership theories, highlighting the mediating role of job satisfaction, and expanding our understanding of leadership effectiveness in GLCs. To improve employee outcomes, it also offers practical implications, including suggestions for strategic communication campaigns and leadership development. To improve job satisfaction and employee performance, the study specifically recommends that organizations create structured internal communication strategies that encourage clarity, feedback, and employee engagement. Additionally, leaders should adopt adaptive leadership approaches aligned with SLT and cultivate high-quality relationships, as emphasized by LMX Theory. The framework should be empirically validated in various organizational and cultural contexts in future studies. Bridging theory and practice, this study enhances communication tactics, leadership, and organizational effectiveness.

Keywords: job satisfaction; leadership style; strategic communication; employee performance; government-linked companies

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose and Scope

This conceptual paper uses job satisfaction as a mediating variable to examine the relationship between employee performance, strategic communication, and leadership style (Memon et al., 2023). The study is essential to organisational behaviour and human resource management because it examines how effective leadership and communication techniques can improve employee performance. The focus on GLCs in Malaysia provides a practical context that addresses both theoretical and applied aspects of the research. As Malaysian GLCs are essential to the country's economic performance, governance outcomes, and strategic sector development, improving employee performance within these organisations directly affects organisational effectiveness, the creation of public value, and the country's competitiveness. This study emphasises the crucial role of leaders in shaping organisational culture and performance outcomes by examining how communication tactics interact with adaptive leadership style (Hajiali et al., 2022). While transformational and transactional leadership styles are widely examined, this study takes a more narrowly focused theoretical approach, focusing on leadership adaptability (SLT) and leader–member relational quality (LMX), which are especially pertinent to explaining how communication practices affect employee performance and job satisfaction. Additionally, it highlights the crucial role of job satisfaction in determining employee engagement, motivation, and productivity. The study adds to the larger conversation on communication and leadership techniques in the public sector by providing managers and legislators with insightful information on increasing organisational success and employee engagement (Rajoria et al., 2022; Tan & Hanafiah, 2023)

1.2 Research Problem

The existing literature has extensively examined communication strategies, leadership styles, and their effects on employee performance (Al-Kharabsheh et al., 2023). However, a significant gap exists in how job satisfaction mediates this relationship, especially concerning GLCs in Malaysia (Toropova et al., 2021). Additionally, there is still a lack of research on LMX and SLT theories in this framework. This gap is especially important in the context of Malaysian GLCs, as many organisations still struggle with inconsistent employee performance, communication inefficiencies, and engagement issues, often driven by a mismatch between internal communication practices and leadership behaviours. By highlighting leadership flexibility and relational quality in influencing employee outcomes, integrating SLT and LMX offers a more comprehensive framework for understanding and resolving these problems. By examining how communication and leadership influence performance through job satisfaction, this research fills these gaps and advances theoretical and practical understanding of this dynamic. The study aims to create a more nuanced view of these intricate relationships by examining the subtleties of SLT, which adapts to specific settings and followers' demands, and LMX theory, which highlights the quality of leader-member relationships. This study provides insights into improving communication tactics and leadership effectiveness, resulting in a more contented, engaged, and productive workforce (Hirawati & Pradana, 2023; Men & Jiang, 2016). Doing this closes significant knowledge and real-world application gaps in Malaysian GLCs (Isa et al., 2023).

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objectives of this paper are to investigate the relationship between leadership style and employee performance in Malaysian GLCs, analyse the effect of strategic communication on employee performance, investigate the role that job satisfaction plays as a mediator in the relationship between these factors, and integrate insights from LMX and SLT Theories

to offer a conceptual framework that can be applied to GLCs. By doing this, this study aims to provide a better understanding of how various leadership philosophies can directly affect worker motivation and output when paired with efficient communication techniques. Accordingly, the general objective of this study is to develop a conceptual framework explaining how leadership style and strategic communication influence employee performance through the mediating role of job satisfaction in Malaysian GLCs.

The specific objectives are as follows:

- 1) To examine the relationship between adaptive leadership style and employee performance.
- 2) To analyse the effect of strategic communication on employee performance.
- 3) To investigate the relationship between adaptive leadership style, strategic communication, and job satisfaction.
- 4) To examine the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between adaptive leadership style, strategic communication, and employee performance.
- 5) To integrate insights from SLT and LMX Theory in developing a conceptual framework for Malaysian GLCs.

1.4 Theoretical Contribution

The combination of LMX and SLT provides a convincing framework for understanding job satisfaction and leadership effectiveness in dynamic organisational contexts. By connecting these theories, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of leadership effectiveness in dynamic organisational contexts (Matthews et al., 2018). LMX explains how the quality of leader-member relationships influences communication effectiveness and employee engagement, while SLT captures the adaptive dimension of leadership behaviour in response to situational demands. A more thorough explanation of how leadership behaviours affect job satisfaction and, eventually, employee performance is offered by their integration. It also offers a clearer perspective on how communication methods and leadership styles can be tailored to different employee demands and conditions (Maqbool et al., 2023). Specifically, the study suggests that to facilitate more responsive and efficient communication that improves job satisfaction and employee performance, leadership and communication should be adjusted to employees' readiness and situational needs (SLT) while maintaining strong relational exchanges (LMX). Effective leadership can improve job satisfaction through constructive interactions between leaders and followers, according to Rachmawati and Lestari (2023), who also note that job satisfaction is a crucial mediating factor in the relationship between LMX and employee performance. This is consistent with research by Sutherland et al. (2022), which highlights that effective leadership depends on the ability to adapt to shifting conditions to foster an environment that encourages worker engagement and satisfaction.

Furthermore, the study by Idowu Sulaimon Adeniyi et al. (2024) emphasises the importance of adapting leadership philosophies and communication techniques to accommodate a range of employee demands. This flexibility is essential for improving job satisfaction because it enables leaders to effectively address their teams' specific needs. The focus on communication tactics indicates a significant shift in leadership research, in which the capacity to inspire and engage staff members is increasingly recognised as a critical component of successful organisations.

In the context of Malaysian GLCs, Isa et al. (2023) offer a regional viewpoint that enhances the discussion of successful leadership. According to their research, integrating local knowledge into leadership techniques can significantly increase worker engagement and job satisfaction, improving organisational performance. In addition to addressing theoretical shortcomings, this localised approach provides managers looking to apply context-driven leadership techniques that connect with their employees with helpful advice (Jang et al., 2023; Rezapour & Sattari Ardabili, 2017).

The suggested conceptual framework for organisational leaders in GLCs encourages a shift towards more specialised communication and leadership strategies. By focusing on their staff's needs, leaders can create a work environment that

enhances job satisfaction and overall performance. This paradigm could enable extensive efforts to increase organisational efficacy in Malaysia and comparable contexts by influencing management strategies and policy decisions inside public-sector organisations. In summary, combining the LMX and SLT theories offers a sophisticated perspective on effective leadership, especially in dynamic settings. This study provides important insights for improving employee engagement and organisational performance by highlighting the mediating influence of job satisfaction and the significance of customised communication tactics.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Existing Theories and Concepts

Several theoretical frameworks help explain how leadership, communication, job satisfaction, and employee performance are related. The two main leadership lenses used in this research are LMX Theory and SLT. SLT places a strong emphasis on leadership flexibility, suggesting that capable leaders modify their actions in response to followers' readiness, competence, and situational needs (Hersey et al., 2013; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). On the other hand, LMX Theory focuses on the quality of relationships between leaders and employees, contending that positive interactions promote loyalty, trust, and support, resulting in better work outcomes (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). When taken together, these theories offer a more comprehensive explanation of leadership effectiveness: LMX describes how the quality of these interactions influences employee attitudes and responses, while SLT describes how leaders modify their behaviour in response to shifting employee needs.

In GLCs, where formal communication channels, hierarchical structures, and diverse employee expectations make both leadership flexibility and relational quality crucial for maintaining job satisfaction and employee performance, this integration is especially pertinent. Simultaneously, the literature on strategic communication highlights that good internal communication strengthens job satisfaction and improves work outcomes by coordinating organisational goals with employee comprehension, involvement, and engagement (Hallahan et al., 2007; Men & Jiang, 2016; Zeffass & Volk, 2018). According to this perspective, job satisfaction is widely acknowledged as a crucial explanatory mechanism that connects communication and leadership techniques to worker productivity, retention, and organisational success (Jang et al., 2023; Judge et al., 2001).

According to LMX Theory, high-quality interactions between leaders and their subordinates foster trust, loyalty, and improved performance (Easiah & Alias, 2023; Suhartono et al., 2023). The calibre of these interactions can significantly impact job satisfaction, which has been widely acknowledged as a crucial mediator in the relationship between leadership and employee performance. According to studies, leaders who try to cultivate close bonds with their team members see a rise in job satisfaction, which raises retention and productivity rates (Prasetyo, 2024; Toropova et al., 2021). Furthermore, the LMX Theory's emphasis on loyalty and trust aligns with numerous studies that highlight the importance of communication in leadership. To match organisational goals with employee engagement, leaders must use effective communication tactics to properly communicate their vision and expectations (Maroof et al., 2023).

In this alignment process, strategic communication is essential, especially in modern organisational settings where rapid change is common. By integrating strategic communication into leadership practices, executives can effectively engage staff, ensuring they are educated and motivated to support the company's goals. A culture of trust and cooperation is fostered by leaders who prioritise transparent and empathetic communication (Men & Jiang, 2016; Pološki Vokić et al., 2023). This is crucial for negotiating the intricacies of contemporary organisational life (Dudai, 2023). This is especially important during times of crisis, when good communication can reduce uncertainty and boost staff morale (Waruwu et al., 2024).

Job satisfaction is a crucial factor mediating the relationship between leadership and performance. According to research, it significantly impacts staff productivity, retention, and overall organisational success (Prasetyo, 2024; Suhartono et al., 2023).

This relationship emphasises the importance of leadership approaches that foster support, trust, and employee engagement in shaping job satisfaction. The necessity for leaders to be sensitive to the needs and goals of their staff to foster an atmosphere that encourages commitment and satisfaction is further highlighted by the role that job satisfaction plays in moderating the impacts of leadership on performance (Labrague & Santos, 2021).

Furthermore, to effectively respond to uncertainty and quickly changing workplace conditions, leaders had to adjust their communication, decision-making, and employee support strategies. The COVID-19 pandemic provides a real-world example of the significance of leadership adaptability aligned with SLT. (Kartikawangi & Dahesihsari, 2020). The pandemic has highlighted the need for leaders to be flexible and sensitive to the difficulties presented by such extraordinary conditions (Yokuş, 2022). Research indicates that team members are more likely to develop trust and resilience when leaders communicate openly and empathetically during times of crisis (Badu et al., 2023). This highlights the importance of leadership adaptability, consistent with SLT, in helping organisations respond to crisis conditions.

Fostering a comprehensive approach to leadership requires integrating diverse leadership ideas and communication techniques. By combining ideas from SLT Theory, LMX Theory, and strategic communication concepts, leaders can thoroughly grasp how to engage their people and propel organisational success. With this comprehensive approach, leaders can remain sensitive to their employees' needs while navigating the challenges of contemporary organisational life. In summary, the research on communication and leadership emphasises the value of flexibility, strong interpersonal ties, and strategic communication in promoting worker satisfaction and engagement. The way these components interact emphasises the importance of leadership in shaping company culture and boosting output. The knowledge gained from these theoretical frameworks will be crucial in helping leaders adopt more efficient procedures that put the company's success and its employees' welfare first as organisations continue to change in response to outside threats.

2.2 Gaps in Knowledge

Several important gaps remain in the literature on employee performance, leadership, and communication, particularly in the context of Malaysian GLCs. First, while previous research has examined communication and leadership as factors that affect employee performance, the mediating role of job satisfaction in explaining how these factors interact to affect performance outcomes has received little attention. Studies that have already been conducted have mostly concentrated on direct effects, with little research done on the indirect pathway through employee attitudes. Given that job satisfaction has been demonstrated to affect retention, productivity, and organisational effectiveness, this is a significant omission (Labrague & Santos, 2021; Maqbool et al., 2023). In this sense, leadership and communication may influence job satisfaction, which, in turn, affects performance, in addition to having a direct impact on it.

Second, the literature indicates a lack of theoretical integration between SLT and LMX Theory. While LMX concentrates on the quality of relationships between leaders and employees, such as mutual respect, trust, and support, SLT explains how leaders modify their behaviours to follower readiness and situational demands (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Hersey et al., 2013). Although both theories offer insights into effective leadership, they are often discussed independently rather than integrated into a cohesive framework. Because of this, the literature offers a limited explanation of how relational quality and leadership adaptability may interact to affect employee performance and job satisfaction, particularly in organisational settings that demand both flexibility and relationship management.

Third, there is still a lack of research on leadership and communication in the Malaysian GLC context. Most of the literature was produced in Western or private-sector contexts, which may not accurately reflect the realities of Malaysian GLCs, where formal communication practices, hierarchical structures, and sociocultural expectations shape workplace dynamics. The significance of placing leadership and employee relations within regional organisational and institutional contexts has been

emphasised by academics (Saks, 2006; Zainal et al., 2022). However, there remains a dearth of conceptual research that clarifies the specific interactions among job satisfaction, leadership behaviours, and communication practices in Malaysian GLCs.

Fourth, although communication is widely acknowledged as crucial to organisational functioning, little is known about how strategic communication affects worker performance through job satisfaction. Employee outcomes are strongly correlated with clarity, engagement, and trust, all of which can be enhanced by effective communication (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Men & Jiang, 2016). However, communication as a component of an integrated leadership-satisfaction-performance mechanism is rarely studied.

When considered collectively, these gaps point to the need for a more focused conceptual explanation of how leadership style and strategic communication affect worker performance through job satisfaction, and to a better understanding of this relationship by integrating SLT and LMX within the Malaysian GLC context. By providing a more cohesive framework for understanding employee performance in complex organisational settings, filling these gaps will advance theory and practice. In addition, these gaps position the present study within the broader scholarly discourse on leadership and organisational communication by showing the need for a more integrated explanation of employee performance in Malaysian GLCs. By combining SLT and LMX Theory, the study proposes a conceptual framework that strengthens theoretical understanding of how leadership adaptability, relational quality, and strategic communication interact through job satisfaction to influence employee performance. At the same time, the focus on Malaysian GLCs enhances the study's practical relevance by linking broader theoretical perspectives with a localised organisational context.

3. Theoretical Framework

3.1 Core Concepts

Although the broader doctoral study initially examined transformational leadership, the present conceptual paper narrows the construct to an adaptive leadership style to align more closely with SLT and the study's emphasis on leadership flexibility in response to employee readiness and situational demands.

Four core concepts underpin this study: employee performance, job satisfaction, strategic communication, and adaptive leadership style. According to SLT and LMX Theory, leadership style refers to a leader's capacity to modify their actions in response to the needs of their workforce and the demands of the situation, while simultaneously cultivating excellent relationships marked by mutual respect, trust, and support (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Strategic communication is defined as intentional and coordinated communication that strengthens internal coordination and employee engagement by fostering clarity, consistency, and understanding of organisational goals (Hallahan et al., 2007; Men & Jiang, 2016). Positive assessments of one's work and workplace are known as job satisfaction. It serves as the mediating factor that connects strategic communication and leadership style to worker performance. It is anticipated that increased job satisfaction will boost commitment, motivation, and willingness to work, thereby improving employee performance (Jang et al., 2023; Tietjen & Myers, 1998). Employee performance is an outcome variable that is influenced both directly by leadership and communication and indirectly by job satisfaction. It refers to how well employees carry out their roles and contribute to organisational objectives (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Hirnawati & Pradana, 2023).

3.2 Relationships Between Concepts

The proposed conceptual framework elucidates the interconnections among leadership style, strategic communication, job satisfaction, and employee performance, primarily through the complementary lenses of LMX Theory and SLT. Empirical studies affirm that leadership style significantly influences employee performance, with effective leadership fostering higher

performance levels (Judge et al., 2004). Additionally, the quality of LMX is crucial, as it directly correlates with job satisfaction; positive leader-subordinate interactions enhance employees' satisfaction and commitment (Hirawati & Pradana, 2023). This relationship underscores the importance of focusing the framework on leadership adaptability, relational quality, strategic communication, job satisfaction, and employee performance. This suggests that strategic communication, alongside relational quality and leadership adaptability, plays an important role in shaping job satisfaction and employee performance (Kazemi et al., 2024). Thus, the interplay of these constructs underlines the importance of quality leadership and communication in achieving favourable organisational outcomes.

3.3 Leadership Style and Job Satisfaction

The literature has extensively shown the connection between job satisfaction and leadership style. Job satisfaction is significantly increased when leaders adapt their strategies to changing circumstances and cultivate positive interactions with their staff. With a t-value of 3.362 and a significance level of 0.001, for example, Hirawati and Pradana (2023)'s study shows that LMX has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction, suggesting that productive leader-member relationships are essential for job satisfaction (Hirawati & Pradana, 2023). Kazemi, who highlights the significance of the manager-employee connection in predicting job satisfaction and commitment, supports this conclusion by arguing that higher levels of job satisfaction can be attributed to the quality of LMX (Kazemi et al., 2024). The idea that supportive leadership creates a favourable work environment is further supported by the fact that different aspects of LMX influence employee outcomes, such as job satisfaction.

3.4 Strategic Communication and Job Satisfaction

Effective communication techniques are crucial for employees to feel informed, appreciated, and aligned with company objectives. According to the research, building trust and engagement is essential to job satisfaction, which requires precise and consistent communication. Effective communication is critical to the relationship between leadership style and employee performance, according to Judge et al. (2004). This supports the view that communication characterised by clarity, responsiveness, and mutual understanding can strengthen employee trust, engagement, and job satisfaction. This supports the view that strategic communication, characterised by clarity, responsiveness, and mutual understanding, can strengthen employee trust, engagement, and job satisfaction (Bharadwaj, 2014; Men & Jiang, 2016).

3.5 Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Motivation, productivity, and retention are all influenced by job satisfaction, a crucial factor in determining employee performance. Employees who are happy in their positions are more likely to be motivated, dedicated, and eager to contribute, all of which enhance individual performance and promote organisational goals (Judge et al., 2001; Tietjen & Myers, 1998). Instead of viewing job satisfaction solely as dependent on monetary compensation, this study views it as an intrinsic work-related attitude that enhances employee engagement and effectiveness.

3.6 Leadership Style, Strategic Communication, and Employee Performance (Mediated by Job Satisfaction)

According to the proposed model, job satisfaction mediates the combined effects of strategic communication and adaptive leadership on employee performance. Leaders who communicate effectively and cultivate positive work environments facilitate optimal performance. The framework proposes that leadership style positively influences employee performance, directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. This suggests that job satisfaction and performance are directly affected by effective leadership (Judge et al., 2004). Furthermore, the results of Gillet et al. (2022) indicate that LMX quality is associated with several favourable employee outcomes, such as performance, which supports the idea that job satisfaction acts as a mediator.

Additionally, prior literature provides conceptual support for the mediation logic proposed in this framework by showing how excellent leader-member interactions can improve job satisfaction and employee performance (Suharnomo & Kartika, 2018).

Finally, by combining fundamental ideas and connections, the theoretical framework provides an organised framework for understanding the relationships among employee performance, communication, and leadership. It supports the study's main objectives and emphasises the significance of job satisfaction as a mediating element. The data from several studies emphasise the importance of strategic communication and leadership style in raising workplace satisfaction, which is ultimately linked to better worker performance. This thorough knowledge can guide organisational procedures to create a productive workplace that supports worker satisfaction and productivity.

3.7 Development Of Propositions

Figure 1.1 presents the study's theoretical framework. The framework illustrates the proposed direct relationships between strategic communication, adaptive leadership style, job satisfaction, and employee performance, as well as the mediating role of job satisfaction. It is theoretically anchored in LMX Theory and SLT, which together explain the relational and adaptive dimensions of leadership relevant to employee outcomes in Malaysian GLCs.

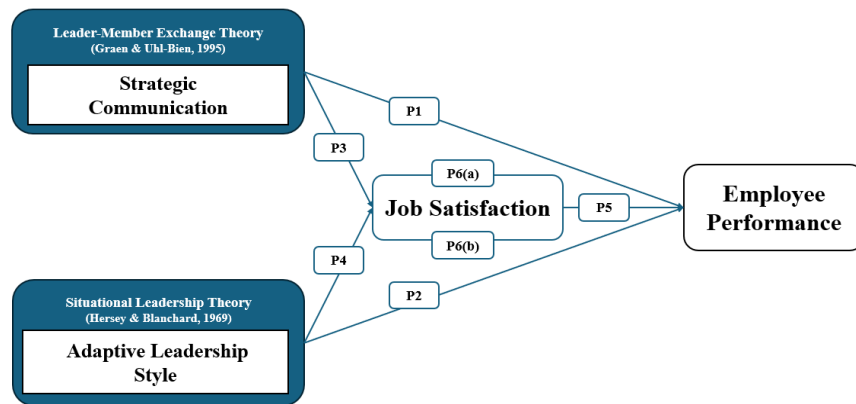


Figure 1.1: Theoretical Framework of the Study
Adapted from Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) and Hersey and Blanchard (1969)

Based on the theoretical framework, the following propositions are advanced to explain the proposed relationships among strategic communication, adaptive leadership style, job satisfaction, and employee performance in Malaysian GLCs.

- P1: Strategic communication positively influences employee performance.
- P2: Adaptive leadership style positively influences employee performance.
- P3: Strategic communication positively influences job satisfaction.
- P4: Adaptive leadership style positively influences job satisfaction.
- P5: Job satisfaction positively influences employee performance.
- P6(a): Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between strategic communication and employee performance.
- P6(b): Job satisfaction mediates the relationship between adaptive leadership style and employee performance.

4. Discussion

4.1 Implications for Theory

This study advances theory by integrating SLT and LMX into a unified framework. Conceptualising job satisfaction as a mediating variable enriches our understanding of the dynamics between leadership, communication, and performance. By demonstrating how adaptable leadership and strategic communication synergistically influence job satisfaction and performance, this research offers a novel perspective that refines the scope of these existing theories. Additionally, the framework emphasises the importance of contextual factors, such as organisational type and regional characteristics, further advancing the applicability of these theories.

A significant development in leadership studies is the unification of LMX and SLT theories into a single paradigm. This study advances theoretical understanding by clarifying how flexible leadership philosophies and strategic communication can work together to improve job satisfaction and performance. According to SLT, leaders must adapt their approaches to meet the various demands of their team members, as effective leadership depends on the situation and the followers' preparation (Sarjito, 2023). On the other hand, a key component of LMX is creating an atmosphere where workers feel appreciated and understood, and this flexibility is essential to achieving this goal. LMX emphasises the quality of the relationship between leaders and their followers, as positive interactions result in improved performance and higher job satisfaction (Ribič & Marič, 2023).

The conceptualisation of job satisfaction enhances the comprehension of the relationships among performance, communication, and leadership as a mediating variable. As a link between leadership behaviours and performance indicators, job satisfaction is crucial to the relationship between leadership styles and employee outcomes. The significance of job satisfaction in the relationship between leadership and performance is further supported by the emotional model of leader-member exchanges, which emphasises how advantageous emotional contacts can result in more helpful behaviours from staff members (Liao et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the study's framework highlights the importance of contextual elements that might affect the applicability of the SLT and LMX theories, such as organisational type and regional features. A sophisticated grasp of how these theories can be modified to suit specific contexts is necessary, as the efficacy of leadership styles can differ significantly across organisational cultures and geographical settings. For example, leaders must be both culturally sensitive and flexible due to the dynamic nature of contemporary organisations, which are marked by quick changes and complex problems (Sarjito, 2023). Leaders must possess this flexibility to navigate the intricacies of diverse work contexts and promote constructive leader-member interactions that enhance job satisfaction.

This integration enables a more thorough investigation of how leadership practices can be optimised to enhance employee outcomes and is also made possible by integrating different ideas into a single framework. This study emphasises the value of establishing a nurturing workplace where staff members feel empowered and involved by identifying job satisfaction as a mediating component. This reinforces the view that adaptive leadership behaviours and high-quality leader-member exchanges can enhance job satisfaction and employee performance within the proposed framework (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Jang et al., 2023; Tietjen & Myers, 1998). This implies that leaders who take a more supportive and participatory stance can significantly impact team morale and productivity. Integrating LMX and SLT theories also offers a strong basis for further study. It creates opportunities to investigate how alternative leadership philosophies can be successfully applied in diverse organisational settings to optimise worker performance and satisfaction. Since these elements play a crucial role in determining employee experiences and results, integrating these theories also pushes academics to consider the emotional and psychological aspects of leader-member interactions (Liao et al., 2023). This study adds to the larger conversation on employee engagement and leadership effectiveness by deepening our understanding of these relationships.

This study has significant theoretical ramifications. Integrating SLT and LMX Theory into a coherent framework enhances our understanding of the intricate relationships among job satisfaction, communication, and leadership while refining preexisting theoretical constructs. Focusing on contextual elements further enhances the applicability of these theories, increasing their relevance in today's varied organisational environments. The knowledge gathered from this study will be crucial in helping leaders adopt more efficient procedures that promote job satisfaction and boost output as organisations change.

4.2 Comparison to Existing Theories

The proposed framework advances existing theories by bridging the gap between SLT's emphasis on adaptability and LMX's focus on relationship quality. While these theories traditionally operate independently, this study illustrates their complementary nature, showing how leaders can enhance performance through situational adaptability and high-quality exchanges. Furthermore, integrating strategic communication into this framework highlights its often-overlooked yet critical role as a driver of job satisfaction and performance, challenging traditional views that focus solely on leadership behaviours.

An important step forward in our understanding of leadership dynamics is the proposed framework that combines LMX and SLT. To improve employee performance and satisfaction, SLT highlights the need for leaders to modify their approaches based on the situational context (Suhartono et al., 2023). LMX, which emphasises the calibre of the bonds between leaders and their followers, complements this flexibility. Effective leadership requires trust, dedication, and loyalty, all fostered by high-quality interactions (Prasetyo, 2024). By connecting these two theories, the framework shows how leaders can maximise performance outcomes by utilising situational flexibility and developing solid interpersonal relationships.

Furthermore, strategic communication must be incorporated within this framework. In conventional leadership studies that focus solely on leadership behaviours, strategic communication is often disregarded, despite being a crucial factor in job satisfaction and performance. For employee engagement and satisfaction, effective communication improves clarity, minimises misconceptions, and creates a positive work atmosphere (Saleem & Malik, 2022). This framework offers a more comprehensive understanding of how leaders can affect employee outcomes by acknowledging the complementary nature of SLT and LMX, as well as the importance of communication. It highlights the significance of leaders' interactions with their team members, communication of the organisation's objectives and expectations, and actions (Zhu & Huang, 2023). In conclusion, the suggested framework provides a comprehensive framework for leadership that incorporates strategic communication, relationship quality, and flexibility. This synthesis offers practical implications for organisational performance and leadership development and improves theoretical understanding.

4.3 Practical Implications

The insights from this study offer significant practical implications, particularly for leaders and policymakers in GLCs. Firstly, the findings emphasise the need for leadership development programs that train leaders to adapt their styles and foster meaningful relationships with employees. In Malaysian GLCs, such programmes should help leaders manage hierarchical reporting structures through adaptive supervision, trust-building, and supportive leader–employee exchanges. Secondly, organisations should prioritise strategic communication initiatives that align employee goals with organisational objectives, thereby enhancing satisfaction and performance. Examples in Malaysian GLCs include structured townhall sessions, briefing cascades, formal feedback channels, and manager-led clarification forums to ensure messages are consistently understood across organisational levels. Finally, the framework provides a foundation for future empirical research. It encourages scholars to test its applicability across different industries and cultural contexts, ultimately informing policies and practices to optimise leadership and communication strategies in diverse organisational settings (Sweeney et al., 2019).

5. Limitations and Future Directions

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5.1 Acknowledging Limitations

This conceptual framework has several limitations. First, the study's reliance on pre-existing theories, such as LMX and SLT, limits its ability to examine new leadership paradigms that may offer different perspectives. Second, while job satisfaction plays a crucial mediating function, it may not adequately account for other organisational and psychological elements that affect worker performance, such as organisational culture, motivation, or emotional intelligence. Thirdly, the findings may not be as applicable to other industries or areas with different organisational and cultural characteristics, given the focus on GLCs in Malaysia. Future research must also address the drawback of the suggested framework's lack of empirical validation.

5.2 Proposing Future Empirical Studies

To address these limitations, several avenues for future research are recommended:

1. Broadening the scope of leadership theories, future studies should explore how emerging theories, such as transformational or servant leadership, interact with strategic communication and job satisfaction to influence employee performance.
2. Incorporating additional mediators and moderators, researchers should examine other mediating and moderating variables, such as organisational commitment, psychological empowerment, or team dynamics, to provide a more holistic understanding of performance determinants.
3. Empirical validation across contexts, conducting studies across different industries, organisational types, and cultural settings, will help validate the framework's applicability and refine its theoretical robustness.
4. Conducting longitudinal studies, long-term investigations into how changes in leadership style and communication strategies impact job satisfaction and performance can provide deeper insights into causality and sustained effects.
5. Exploring digital communication tools, with the growing prominence of remote work and digital communication, future research should assess how virtual communication platforms influence the proposed relationships within the framework.

5.3 Theoretical Refinements

Refinements that incorporate new organisational trends could improve the conceptual framework. Future studies could examine how technological developments, such as AI-powered leadership tools, can enhance strategic communication and worker satisfaction. Furthermore, including interdisciplinary viewpoints like cognitive psychology or behavioural economics may provide fresh insights into the dynamics of employee performance. Scholars can contribute to more effective organisational tactics by addressing these limitations and pursuing the suggested study topics. This will help to develop a theoretical and practical understanding of leadership, communication, and job satisfaction.

6. Conclusion

This study presents a conceptual framework that integrates SLT and LMX Theories to explore the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship among leadership style, strategic communication, and employee performance. By addressing existing literature gaps, this study offers valuable insights into how adaptive leadership and effective communication strategies can drive job satisfaction and performance, particularly within the context of GLCs in Malaysia. The theoretical significance of this work lies in its innovative integration of established theories to address a nuanced organisational challenge. This study

enriches the academic discourse on leadership and organisational behaviour by conceptualising job satisfaction as a mediating variable and emphasising its pivotal role in achieving superior employee performance. The localised focus on GLCs in Malaysia further contributes to the global understanding of these dynamics, showcasing how region-specific insights can inform broader theoretical applications.

To explain how adaptive leadership and strategic communication affect employee performance through job satisfaction, especially in Malaysian GLCs, this study offers a conceptual framework that integrates SLT and LMX Theory. The integration of well-established leadership and communication perspectives to address an organisational challenge specific to a given context constitutes its theoretical contribution. The study enhances understanding of how leadership and communication practices can align with employee expectations and organisational goals in culturally and structurally unique GLC settings by emphasising job satisfaction as a crucial mediating mechanism.

The regional emphasis on GLCs in Malaysia significantly advances our understanding of these dynamics globally by demonstrating how local knowledge can inform broader theoretical applications. This study reveals exceptional opportunities and challenges that might not be apparent in other contexts by examining the relationship between communication and leadership styles in Malaysia's cultural and organisational environment. For example, Malaysian GLCs' hierarchical structures and deeply rooted cultural norms may shape how leadership and communication tactics are perceived and applied, underscoring the need for customised approaches. Furthermore, this study advances knowledge by highlighting the significance of job satisfaction in coordinating communication and leadership strategies with employee expectations and organisational objectives. Since job satisfaction directly affects employee engagement, retention, and productivity, managers and leaders seeking to maximise performance can benefit from including it as a mediator.

To confirm the proposed framework's applicability and refine its elements, this study urges academics to test it empirically across various organisational contexts. It is advised that practitioners and legislators use these insights to create communication plans and leadership development initiatives specific to their company's needs. This study provides a strong foundation for understanding the relationship between employee performance, leadership, and communication by bridging theory and practice. This will ultimately lead to improved organisational success and sustainability.

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