

Enhancing Work Performance: The Role of Communication and Leadership Styles

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ABSTRACT

Effective communication styles are essential to encourage understanding of expectations, effective workforce management, and organisational growth to stimulate employee work performance. This study explores the complex relationships between leadership styles, work performance, and communication styles. Employee commitment is found to have implications for organisational commitment aspects like responsibility, loyalty, and trust. Effective interpersonal and leadership communication encompasses relationships beyond and within the workplace. This study uses a questionnaire-based survey to investigate how leadership styles mediate the relationship between the factors of communication styles and job performance in Malaysian organisations. The perceptions of communication style, the mediating effect of leadership styles, and the relationship between communication style and job performance are investigated using quantitative data analysis using descriptive, inferential, and correlation tests to perform mediation analysis. The findings indicate the need for communication-focused training and engagement programmes and the significance of assertive communication styles for improved work performance. The study also establishes the critical need for leaders to comprehend the needs, motivations, and efficiency drivers of each team member. The study offers directions for future research, including larger geographic coverage, more communication variables, mixed-method techniques, and the investigation of other indirect effects. The study's conclusions give leaders practical advice on how to improve organisational communication for improved work performance and encourage employee trust and commitment.

Keywords: *Communication styles, leadership styles, performance, assertive communication, organisational communication.*

INTRODUCTION

In the realm of organisational excellence, job performance is not merely a component; it is the very essence of an organisation's purpose, vision, and mission (Hendri, 2019; Swanson, 2020). Leadership styles, a pivotal factor in the equation, wield profound influence over how a leader harnesses and deploys the knowledge and skills at their disposal. A key component of job performance depends on how different leadership qualities interact with one another (Runi, Ramli, Nujum, & Kalla, 2017).

Job performance, whether executed individually or collectively, is the tangible manifestation of individuals and groups discharging their respective organisational responsibilities (Octaria et al., 2021). The success or failure of an organisation is inexorably intertwined with the tapestry of leadership that weaves through its corridors (Octaria et al., 2021). The communication style employed by leaders assumes a pivotal role as it serves as a decision-making tool for evaluating and cultivating job performance (Lee & Kim, 2021). Notably, job performance reverberates within the organisation, sculpting its innovative culture and competitive edge. Organisational culture shapes leadership styles, and in turn, leadership styles leave their indelible mark on job performance (Khan et al., 2020; Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). The study by Balakrishnan (2022) adds depth to the understanding of how cultural factors can shape communication approaches and underscores the importance of effective communication in diverse settings (Balakrishnan, Harji, & Angusamy, 2020, 2021).

Communication serves as the lifeblood of interaction among individuals (Husin, 2019). Proficiency in communication stands as a prerequisite for reaching the zenith of job performance and nurturing harmonious working relationships within the organisational milieu (Hee et al., 2019). The cultivation of trust among employees finds its roots in quality communication, acting as a catalyst for enhanced employee productivity and the promotion of teamwork (Hee et al., 2019). Effective communication not only forges cohesive teams but also fuels job performance, simultaneously mitigating employee turnover (Hee et al., 2019). At its core, job performance reflects a leader's actions and accomplishments—a product that aligns with the organisation's rules, demands, and expectations. This multifaceted construct is shaped by abilities, exertion, and task perception (Hee et al., 2019).

The way we communicate holds the key to our effectiveness and efficiency. Style, in this context, transcends literary texts and permeates all forms of communication (Paraschiv, 2020). Communication style is the distinctive fingerprint that manifests during the act of communication, influencing how messages are conveyed, received, processed, and interpreted. It encompasses individual modes of responding and unique feedback characteristics, all stemming from the intricate tapestry of human personality (Azizah, Anggraini, & Ulfa, 2023). Consequently, communication style shapes an individual's social universe, the processing of information, and the transformation of information into actionable insights.

The effectiveness of leadership hinges on an individual's willingness to communicate effectively and develop refined communication skills (Paraschiv, 2020). Skilful communicators wield the power to influence others (Andersson, 2019). Extensive meta-analyses underscore the positive correlations between transformational leadership and subordinates' job satisfaction, leader effectiveness, and job performance (Chandrasekara, 2019). Leadership exerts profound influence over employee contentment and trust within the organisation (Andersson, 2019). Effective communication serves as a conduit for elevating employee productivity and fostering cohesion among team members. Conversely, poor communication within the workplace can erode trust and precipitate unproductive operations. Organisations that neglect the importance of communication struggle to achieve the same levels of job performance as those that prioritise effective communication (Hee et al., 2019). Notably, while scholars like Walters and Meluch (2019) have highlighted the significance of communication in organisations, it has not always been given its due importance within organisational settings.

Research indicates that a leader's communication style has multiple connections to subordinates' team commitment (Syakur, 2020). Donkor, Dongmei and Sekyere (2021) further explore how staff's commitment indirectly impacts leadership styles and employee performance. Men, Yue, and Liu's (2020) investigation delves into the structure of a leader's communication style within the context of organisational change, shedding light on successful communication strategies. However, consensus among scholars regarding the precise mechanisms through which leader communication styles influence job performance remains elusive.

Purwanto (2020) delves into the influence of leadership effectiveness and roles on job performance, emphasising that high leadership quality is linked to improved job performance and the reputation of organisations, regardless of past performance records. This underscores the profound impact of behavioural complexity and dynamics on leadership perception. Likewise, research exploring the connection between distinct leadership styles and team innovation within private research institutions offers insights into the mechanisms through which leadership styles influence team innovation (Khan et al., 2020; Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019).

Notably, the leadership style exhibited within an organisation can potentially affect the attitudes and behaviours of every employee, particularly when combined with inadequate leadership methods at various management levels, as suggested by Mwesigwa, Tusiime and Ssekiziyivu (2020). The correlation between leadership style and the ability to facilitate effective job performance remains paramount in addressing organisational challenges stemming from poor leadership styles in both public and private organisations. Empirical evidence, such as that presented by Moore et al. (2020), underscores the pivotal influence of the leader-employee relationship in the workplace. Despite such emphasis on leadership communication, the value of communication within organisations has often been overlooked by scholars, as emphasised by Bakar, Walters and Halim (2014) and Hee et al. (2019).

While previous research in Malaysia has focused primarily on transformational leadership styles and job performance, this study aims to broaden the scope by considering various leadership styles and their intersection with communication styles and job performance. Given the limited research on communication styles and job performance, along with the mediating role of leadership styles in Malaysia, this study seeks to examine these critical aspects within the Malaysian context. This leads to the following research questions:

- (1) To examine the relationship between the leaders' communication style factors and employees' job performance.
- (2) To analyse the role of leadership styles as a mediator in the relationship between leaders' communication styles and employees' job performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communication style refers to an individual's speech characteristics used in communication, including verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal cues. It demonstrates how listeners understand and receive spoken messages. Leadership styles are the frequency or intensity of various attitudes and behaviours, focusing on multiple leadership responsibilities. Leadership is a social influence process where a leader seeks voluntary cooperation from employees to achieve organisational goals. Leadership can be categorised into four categories: born leaders, personality, character attributes, influence and ability, and behaviours influencing

culture. Effective communication is essential for leadership, as it affects everyone's viewpoint and behaviours to align with collective goals and needs.

Leaders in the government and nonprofit sectors are concerned about job performance, which involves regularly monitoring and examining the determinants of an organisation's or program's performance. Job performance systems are essential for supporting management processes, planning, budgeting, process improvement, and benchmarking. Managers manage employee job performance, which is crucial for an organisation's success.

Communication Style

Communication styles are essential for effective communication in various situations. Passive, aggressive, passive aggressive, and assertive communication styles are defined by their characteristics. Passive communicators are soft-spoken, unable to articulate their feelings, and rely on others. Aggressive communicators criticise others, are impetuous, and expect things from others. Assertive communicators appreciate the need to respect others, are receptive to recommendations, and express their own opinions.

Assertive communication is a hybrid of passive and aggressive styles, requiring equality and power. It requires an open approach, listening to various points of view, and respect for others. Effective communication is crucial for a successful organisation. Norton (1983) identified 10 different communication styles: dominant, dramatic, argumentative, energetic, impression, calm, focused, friendly, affectionate, and precise. These styles were blended by McCallister (1992) to create noble, introspective, and Socratic communication styles. Aggressive leaders express employees' rights while advocating for their needs in a way that contradicts their sentiments and ideas. They avoid expressing their needs and feel shy about protecting their rights. Passive leaders may struggle to transmit the full punch of their message, creating annoyance and slowness. Assertive communication allows leaders to be themselves and speak up for themselves without causing harm to others. It involves sincerity, impartiality, flexibility, patience, precision, personality, and self-respect. Effective communication begins with recognising one's own communication style in the presence of others and adopting the other person's style when interacting with others.

Job Performance

Leadership is a crucial aspect of human experience, as it involves the ability to influence one another's behaviour and form an organisation's culture. It can be defined as the technique by which individuals influence one another's behaviour, with successful or vital leadership being the most important aspect. Leadership is essential for group studies, as it impacts the group's existence and efficiency.

Galton's Hereditary Genius (Bramwell, 1869) was one of the first leadership studies, emphasising the idea that exceptional people possess a specific ability known as leadership. This concept, known as the great man theory, spawned the study of leadership qualities, which was later replaced by situational leadership theory. Situational leadership theory states that effective leadership requires a reasonable understanding of the circumstances and an appropriate response, rather than a charismatic leader with a large following.

Effective leadership can take two forms: transformational leadership and transactional leadership. Transformational leaders inspire others to produce extraordinary work by displaying charisma and a shared vision with their followers. Transactional leadership is characterised by a "give and take" working relationship, where the relationship between

the leader and the follower is built by exchange, such as a reward system for achieving specific goals (Mwesigwa et al., 2020). Transformational leaders convince their followers to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the organisation.

Transactional leadership, on the other hand, focuses on encouraging staff through a contingent-reward structure (Mwesigwa et al., 2020). In exchange for greater job performance, employees receive praise, monetary prizes, or promotions. Effective communication is essential for leaders to motivate and influence employees. Transformational leadership is demonstrated when a leader prioritises the needs of their employees, creates understanding and acceptance of the organisation's goals and objectives, and motivates individuals other than self-interest for the best interest of the team. Transactional leadership, on the other hand, is motivated by their constituents' self-interest and focuses on a relationship of exchange between what they look for. To ensure that these aims are met, leaders must establish and convey goals and objectives, as well as organise tasks and activities with the help of their staff.

Job performance is determined by individual acts and is based on skills and understanding. It encompasses all employees' talents, efforts, and abilities that contribute to the organisation's enhanced production and achievement of its goals. Learning organisations play a significant role in enhancing employee job performance by providing training and development (Herawati et al., 2021). Employees provide a competitive edge for businesses, and to achieve better results, companies must focus on employee satisfaction, training, and management standards (Elrehail et al., 2019). Motivation, derived from the Latin word "mover," is essential for job satisfaction and is influenced by factors such as growth, work directly, the possibility for advancement, responsibility, recognition, and achievement.

Employee job performance is assessed to determine the levels of activities completed in accordance with desired outcomes. Job performance evaluation is crucial in job performance management and depends on an organisation's rules, designs, and characteristics (Bakker & de Vries, 2021). Employee job performance has a significant positive impact on company job performance (Herawati, Tan, Lubis & Hidayat, 2021), as it determines how well employees perform their jobs and complete their tasks. Job performance indices are tools for determining whether a goal has been met, and each organisation is recruited to ensure the achievement of its objectives through manageable tasks and effective operations (Herawati et al., 2021).

Communication Styles, Job Performance and Leadership Style

Effective communication is crucial for job performance and healthy working relationships within an organisation (Hee et al., 2019). It fosters trust, boosts productivity and teamwork, and reduces employee turnover (Walters, 2017). However, weak communication can lead to loss of confidence and ineffective operations (Hee et al., 2019). Organisations with poor communication have lower chances of achieving the same job performance as those with excellent quality. Communication among employees often goes unnoticed, but it is essential for an organisation's success, as effective communication leads to increased productivity and efficiency.

A leader's communication style significantly influences work engagement, commitment, and interrelationships in a project team (Yang, Kuria & Gu, 2020). Clarity, assertiveness, and support for subordinates foster mutual closeness and trust, leading to self-improvement. Open and honest communication results in a highly motivated workforce (Yue,

Men & Ferguson, 2019; Caniëls, Chiocchio & van Loon, 2019). Participative leadership leads to improved employee job performance and increased revenues. Leaders are responsible for their employees' job performance and the growth of the organisation, so they should be motivated as well. Communication styles range from authoritarian to participative (Olayisade & Awolusi, 2021), and leaders must communicate clearly and concisely to all levels of the organisation. Participative leaders achieve greater scores than non-participative leaders (Arif, 2022). Path-goal leadership styles can predict subordinate commitment and lead to better job performance (Rana, K'aol, & Kirubi, 2019). The adaptation of the most suitable leadership style is needed to move the team towards the right direction of the organisation's goals (Ibrahim, 2018) and accept staff decisions. Balakrishnan, Harji, and Angusamy (2019) provided insights into the role of communication styles in educational contexts, which can be extended to leadership and organisational settings.

Path-goal leadership styles have been found to significantly impact workgroup effectiveness, leading to improved employee job performance. Participative leadership is effective in achieving high job performance as it involves consulting with subordinates to clarify and achieve objectives (Chan, 2019). Job performance management is crucial for organisations to achieve their goals, as it provides data essential for decision-making. Job content and context positively influence general job performance (Shaikh, Tunio, & Shah, 2017; López-Cabarcos, Vázquez-Rodríguez & QuinoA-Pineiro, 2022). Motivation mechanisms within organisations can increase leaders' job performance and work hard to meet targets (Yamin, 2020). Leadership styles, including the leader's method of providing direction, determine the morale of leaders within the organisation.

Individuals must understand their own leadership style to progress professionally, personally, and developmentally. Leadership is essential in every job, and people want to work with people who are good communicators and possess strong professional and personal leadership skills (Dirani et al., 2020). The relationship between leadership style and employee job performance can help address organisational difficulties like work engagement and high turnover caused by bad leadership styles (Lee, Idris, & Tuckey, 2019). Leaders have their own learning style, motivation, goals, and leadership style, which they use to motivate their organisations and improve their own and their employees' job performance. Leaders need to grow their competence in terms of their abilities, positive attitude, and knowledge to efficiently build and maintain organisations (Mohd Adnan & Valliappan, 2019).

Theoretical Framework

Effective communication within an organisation is essential for fostering healthy interpersonal interactions (DeVito, 2019). Three primary communication styles have been identified in the literature. Aggressive communication, which is characterised by a constant desire to assert oneself at the expense of others, aggressive communication may lead to retaliation and negative emotions (Agarwal, 2019). The assertive style involves self-confidence and the ability to assert personal rights without infringing on others' rights (Sochukwum et al., 2020). This leads to higher self-esteem, self-confidence, and mutual understanding.

In contrast, passive communication often results in a loss of self-esteem as individuals fail to express their needs clearly (Ogunyemi & Olagbaju, 2020). The study asserts that passive communicators tend to avoid conflict, complain rather than take action, and let others make decisions. Persuasive communication is yet another style that involves playing a subtle role until favourable conditions are created to achieve objectives (Sochukwuma et al., 2020). In

this study, the communication styles proposed by Sherman (1999), aggressive, assertive, and passive, will be employed to assess their impact on job performance while also considering the mediating effect on leadership styles.

Job performance is a complex construct influenced by various leadership styles and motivational factors (Yamin, 2020). Implicit leadership theories influence how individuals perceive leaders based on attributes and behaviour (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). Charismatic leadership is often regarded positively and forms a fundamental component of implicit leadership theories (Yang et al., 2020). In situational leadership theory, effective leadership necessitates understanding the situation and responding appropriately (Rana et al., 2019). This theory emphasises adapting leadership styles based on task-orientation and people-orientation (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019). Dixon and Hart (2010) found a strong link between path-goal leadership styles and workgroup effectiveness, leading to improved employee job performance. Participative leadership is associated with higher staff job performance and earnings (Chan, 2019). Transformational leaders inspire followers, fostering trust and motivation (Chandrasekara, 2019). Transactional leaders rely on rewards and punishments to motivate subordinates (Mwesigwa et al., 2020). Two-factor theory of Herzberg's theory divides job factors into motivators and hygiene factors, where motivators promote job satisfaction and motivation while hygiene factors mitigate job dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1959; Arif, 2022). Job performance encompasses both task and contextual performance, reflecting an individual's technical contributions and their impact on the work environment (Lee et al., 2019).

Motivated employees exhibit improved job performance, and various factors, including job security, training, compensation, and intrinsic rewards, contribute to motivation (Emeka, Amaka, & Ejim, 2015). Employee motivation is not only linked to performance but also influences retention and the organisation's reputation (Yamin, 2020). In this study, the theoretical framework incorporates situational theory, path-goal theory, transformational, transactional leadership theories, and Herzberg's two-factor theory to analyse their impact on communication styles and job performance within the Malaysian context.

Socioanalytic theory (DeVito, 2019) posits that individual differences in job success are shaped by interpersonal dynamics, emphasising that individuals operate within groups organised by status hierarchies. Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Hypothesis (Herzberg, 1959) divides job factors into motivators, which promote job satisfaction and motivation, and hygiene factors, which mitigate job dissatisfaction. Improving motivators is key to enhancing employee job satisfaction.

Job performance is influenced by leadership styles and motivational factors. Transformational leadership, characterised by charisma and inspiration, contrasts with transactional leadership, which relies on rewards and punishments (Mwesigwa et al., 2020). Participative leadership empowers employees and correlates with higher job performance (Chan, 2019). Path-goal leadership styles, emphasising the role of leaders in guiding employees towards goals, can enhance workgroup effectiveness (Rana, K'aol & Kirubi, 2019). Implicit leadership theories influence how leaders are perceived based on their attributes and behaviour (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). In this study, the theoretical framework incorporates these diverse leadership styles, Herzberg's two-factor theory, and socioanalytic theory to investigate their impact on communication styles and job performance in the Malaysian context.

The socioanalytic theory serves as the main theoretical framework for this study, which also incorporates other theories and frameworks. The importance of status hierarchies and interpersonal interactions in understanding individual disparities in job success is emphasized by socioanalytic theory. It offers a paradigm for comprehending how social interactions and organisational hierarchies affect leadership styles, communication styles, and ultimately job performance. To comprehend the elements influencing job satisfaction and dissatisfaction, the effects of leadership styles on workgroup effectiveness, and the relationships between motivation and performance, the study also makes use of Herzberg's two-factor theory, path-goal theory, and transformational and transactional leadership theories. Researchers can examine several aspects of the study problem and acquire a more complete understanding of it because of this comprehensive approach's holistic perspective on these important components and their relationships.

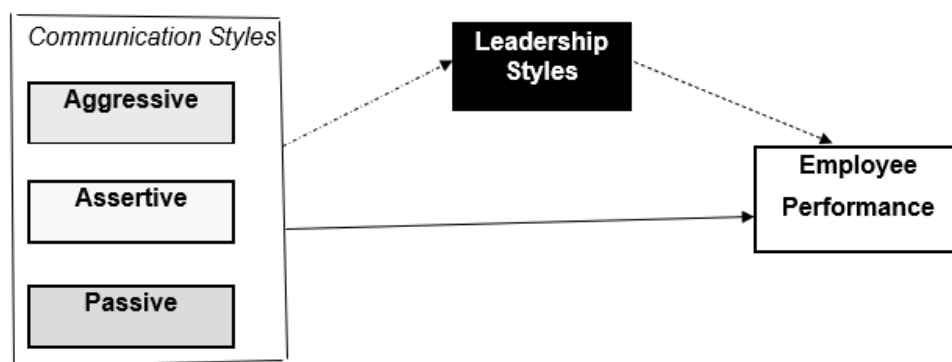


Figure 1: Research framework

Hypotheses Construction

The hypotheses were developed based on insights from existing literature and the behaviours of leaders and employees in the context of communication. Mohammed et al. (2023) suggested that leaders commonly employ an assertive communication style. This style is widely used in various situations and allows leaders to communicate openly without causing offence. Assertive communication is believed to have a positive impact on job performance, as it facilitates valuable feedback from employees without resorting to criticism. Additionally, assertive leaders prioritise employees and express gratitude, which can further enhance job performance (Khan et al., 2020).

Conversely, aggressive communication styles, as indicated by Johnson et al. (2018), are associated with a reduction in individual job performance. Aggressive communication involves challenging others and responding to aggression, leading to ill feelings and resentment among employees. Such a communication style is linked to job dissatisfaction (Agarwal, 2019). Leaders employing aggressive communication express their opinions and needs in a manner that disregards employees' rights, negatively impacting job performance (Agarwal, 2019).

Passive communication, although not explored extensively, is characterised by difficulty in conveying one's thoughts effectively, quick anger, delays, rework, and overall poor job performance. Passive communicators tend to be unconcerned about task completion (Specchia et al., 2021).

Hence, the research focuses on communication styles and job performance, with assertive communication as likely to enhance job performance, while aggressive communication is seen as detrimental. Passive communication is briefly mentioned as having negative implications for job performance. The hypotheses for the study are constructed based on these observations and existing literature. This led to the construction of the following set of hypotheses:

- H1:** There is a significant and negative relationship between aggressive communication style and job performance.
- H2:** There is a significant and positive relationship between assertive communication style and job performance
- H3:** There is a significant and negative relationship between passive communication style and job performance.

Transformational leadership is positively associated with employee engagement, which is considered a critical predictor of employee job performance (Tan, 2018). Transformational leadership is described as a leadership style that influences employees to align their goals, emotions, and aspirations with the leader's overall vision, ultimately motivating employees to take on more responsibilities and perform well (Chandrasekara, 2019). It is noted that employees who perceive their leaders as transformational tend to be highly satisfied and motivated (Goh, Ang, & Della, 2018; Syakur et al., 2020). Additionally, the study suggests that transactional leadership also has a strong positive effect on job performance (Purwanto, 2020; Khan et al., 2020). The specific type of transactional leadership style employed by leaders is argued to significantly impact transformational job performance (Yang et al., 2020). Transactional leadership is characterised by leaders who emphasise mutual collaboration and team learning with subordinates (Hansen & Pihl-Thingvad, 2019; Purwanto et al., 2020). Leaders' job satisfaction is highlighted as a crucial factor in motivating leaders to perform well (Arif, Zainudin, & Hamid, 2019; Arif, 2022). Several elements contribute to high motivation in leaders and employees, including job stability, contentment, training and development, compensation, appraisals, positive feedback, intrinsic incentives, and extrinsic rewards (Manzoor, 2012; Kumari et al., 2021). Leaders who are motivated are seen as capable of delivering their best performance even in challenging situations and addressing difficult problems effectively. Job satisfaction among leaders is shown to have a positive impact on their job performance (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022). The importance of leaders ensuring that employees receive the necessary satisfaction and incentives is emphasised. Recognising individual success, valuing hard work, and providing constructive guidance on workplace communication are identified as crucial motivating factors for employees (Moore et al., 2020). It is suggested that an increase in job satisfaction can lead to improved job performance (Rana et al., 2019). Hence, the following hypothesis draws upon existing research to establish the foundation for further investigation within the context of the study:

- H4:** Leadership style does not mediate the relationship between aggressive communication styles and job performance.
- H5:** Leadership style mediates the relationship between assertive communication styles and job performance.
- H6:** Leadership style mediates the relationship between passive communication styles and job performance.

METHODOLOGY

This study assessed the relationship between all three constructs of communication styles and the mediating role of leadership styles on job performance. The sampling process, participant selection, sampling technique, sample size and context, data collection method, data analysis tool, research instruments, pilot study, and data analysis processes are briefed in this section of the study's methodology.

The data collection process was conducted online. To identify respondents from various organisations, we employed online searches, email correspondence, and direct communication with human resources departments. Additionally, we engaged with respondents through social media platforms. To facilitate this process, we also gained consent from HR managers who agreed to send invitations to their full-time staff members, inviting them to participate voluntarily in the data collection effort. Prior to data collection, researchers provided participants with a comprehensive explanation of the study's objectives, significance, and survey procedures. Additionally, participants were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, and ethical research principles were strictly adhered to throughout the study. To minimise any potential influence from management, survey questionnaires were directly sent to the respondents. The survey instrument, structured into four distinct sections covering demographics (Section A), communication styles (Section B), leadership styles (Section C), and job performance (Section D), was administered using Google Forms for ease of data collection and monitoring.

The three constructs (passive, aggressive, and assertive) of perceived leadership communication styles were measured using a Brigham Young University (n.d.) instrument. Eight items were used to evaluate each dimension and were positively coded. To evaluate the three styles that leaders are believed to employ while dealing with their employees, the scale's items were distributed randomly. Data on job performance were gathered by employing instruments developed by Herzberg (1959), which focused on characteristics that encourage employees to experience high feelings, enthusiasm, and satisfaction. Leadership style was measured by employing the instrument of Obeidat and Zyod (2015). The degree to which the employees agreed to every statement about the communication style of the immediate superiors was examined on a six-point scale. The positivist philosophy and the deductive reasoning approach were considered to be suitable to achieve the study's objectives.

Participants for this study will be chosen from a range of organisations based in Kuala Lumpur, which offers a meaningful context (economic significance, cultural diversity, presence of major and diverse industries) and known to be Malaysia's most developed and progressive state (Abu-Hussin, 2021). The study's sample was taken from Computer/IT, telecommunications, banking, manufacturing, construction, and education industries to understand how leaders from these industries employ leadership styles to enhance job performance. G-power analysis was used to estimate the sample size of the study, which determined the minimum sample size to be 165. This current study collected 385 valid responses and was deemed fit for statistical analysis, as asserted by Sekaran and Bougie (2016) that a sample size of between 30 and 500 is adequate and acceptable for social science investigations. Purposive sampling was used in this study, as only employees from particular industries participated in this study. This study's data analysis was carried out using IBM SPSS v27 for interpretation and reporting of results in the analysis of quantitative data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents a summary of the descriptive analysis of respondents' demographic backgrounds.

Table 1: Respondents' demography

Profile	Description	Total	Percentage (%)
Gender	Males	206	53.5
	Females	179	46.5
Age	25-30	197	51.2
	31-40	116	30.1
	41-50	54	14.0
	>50	18	4.7
	Department	Manufacturing & Production	95
	Research & Development	69	17.9
	Sales & Marketing	64	16.6
	Purchasing & Procurement	53	13.8
	Logistics	41	10.7
	Human Resource	34	8.8
	Accounting & Finance	29	7.5
Industry	Computer/IT	91	23.6
	Telecommunication	85	22.1
	Banking & Finance	84	21.8
	Manufacturing & Production	66	17.1
	Construction	31	8.1
Administrative Positions	Education	28	7.3
	Support Staff/Non-Executives	128	33.2
	Executives	109	28.3
	Middle Management	92	23.5
Work Experience	Senior Management	56	14.6
	1-2 years	142	36.9
	3-5 years	126	32.7
	6-10 years	88	22.9
	Over 10 years	29	7.5

Table 2 presents reliability test results for all the constructs used in this study. The results of the reliability test demonstrate that all the items have a high level of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha score more than 0.8. The findings showed that the research instrument has adequate construct validity and internal consistency for multiple regression analysis.

Table 2: Reliability test

Constructs	Cronbach Alpha
Aggressive Communication Styles	0.878
Assetive Communication Styles	0.897
Passive Communication Styles	0.876
Job Performance	0.898
Leadership Styles	0.830

Mediation Analysis

SPSS Process Macro Version 4.2 is used to perform mediation analysis. The results summarise the direct and indirect effects for each of the simple mediation models with the independent variable coded as X, dependent variable coded as Y and mediators coded with M. The indirect

effect is studied based on 5000 bootstrap samples. The bootstrapping confidence level that does not include zero indicates a significant mediation effect.

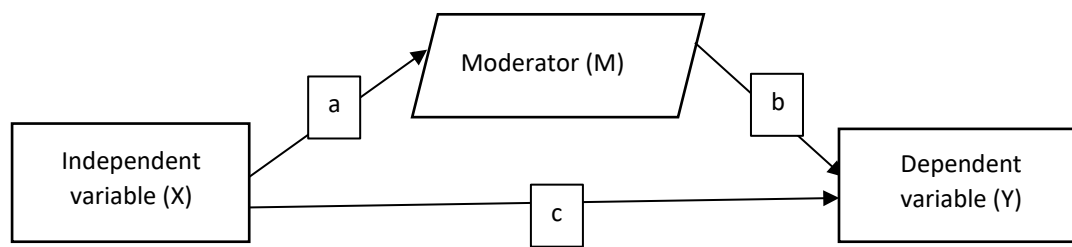


Figure 2: Mediation Path

Table 3 shows the results of the mediation analysis of the Aggressive Communication style (CS 1) with Leadership Styles (LS) on Employee Performance (Perform). For the path 'a', Aggressive Communication style to Leadership Styles, the coefficient value β is 0.1983, t-value of 0.1178 and p-value of 0.8593 > 0.05. Moreover, the 95% confidence interval does contain zero, which indicates that Aggressive Communication style is not significantly related to Leadership Styles. The coefficient value β for the path 'b', Leadership Styles to Employee Performance is 0.8573 with a t-value of 12.4312, p-value of 0.0000 < 0.001, and 95% confidence interval does not contain zero, which shows that Leadership Styles is positively related to Employee Performance. The results of the direct effect for path 'c' reveal a p-value less than 0.0001 and coefficient value of -15.733, which indicates that Aggressive Communication style is negatively related to Employee Performance. Finally, the results of the indirect effect for mediation based on 5000 bootstrap samples, provided a 95% confidence interval of (-2.3925, 2.4138) which includes zero indicates that Leadership styles does not mediate the relationship between Aggressive Communication style and Employee Performance.

Table 3: Mediation results (Aggressive CS)

Variable/ effect	β	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LLCI	ULCI
Aggressive (CS1) → LS (path 'a')	0.1983	1.1178	0.1174	.8593	-1.9994	2.3960
LS → Perform (path 'b')	0.8573	0.0690	12.4312	.0000	0.7217	0.9929
Effects						
Direct (path 'c')	-2.7435	1.5205	-8.381	.0000	-15.733	-9.754
Indirect*	0.17	1.2187			-2.3925	2.4138
Total	-2.5735	1.7956	-7.0023	.0000	-16.1038	-9.0432

*Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

The results of the mediation analysis of the Assertive Communication style (CS2) with Leadership Styles (LS) on Employee Performance (Perform) presented in Table 4. For the path 'a', Assertive Communication style to Leadership Styles, the coefficient value β is 1.0505, t-value of 12.0898 with p-value < 0.0001. Moreover, the 95% confidence interval does not contain zero, which indicates that Assertive Communication style is positively related to Leadership Styles. The coefficient value β for the path 'b', Leadership Styles to Employee Performance is 0.6916 with a t-value of 7.993 p-value < 0.0001, and 95% confidence interval does not contain zero, which shows that Leadership Styles is positively related to Employee Performance. The results of the direct effect for path 'c' shows a p-value of 0.0004 less than

0.001, which indicates that Assertive Communication style is significantly related to Employee Performance. Finally, the results of the indirect effect for mediation based on 5000 bootstrap samples, revealed a 95% confidence interval of (0.4941, 0.9834) which does not include a zero indicates that Leadership Styles mediates the relationship between Assertive Communication style and Employee Performance.

Table 4: Mediation results (Assertive CS)

Variable/ effect	β	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LLCI	ULCI
Assertive (CS2) → LS (path 'a')	1.0505	.0868	12.0898	.0000	0.8798	1.2212
LS → Perform (path 'b')	0.6916	.0865	7.9930	.0000	0.5215	0.8618
Effects						
Direct (path 'c')	0.6166	.1738	3.5467	.0004	0.2748	0.9584
Indirect*	0.7266	.1235			0.4941	0.9834
Total	1.3432	0.1597	8.4097	.0000	1.0292	1.6572

*Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

Table 5 illustrates the results of the mediation analysis of the Passive Communication style (CS3) with Leadership Styles (LS) on Employee Performance (Perform). For the path 'a', Passive Communication style to Leadership Styles, the coefficient value β is -5.0564, t-value of -6.2043 and p-value < 0.0001. Moreover, the 95% confidence interval does not contain zero, which indicates that Passive Communication style is negatively related to Leadership Styles. The coefficient value β for the path 'b', Leadership Styles to Employee Performance is 0.6510 with a t-value of 9.1930, p-value < 0.0001, and 95% confidence interval does not contain zero, which shows that Leadership Styles is positively related to Employee Performance. The results of the direct effect for path 'c' reveal a coefficient value of -11.2928 and p-value less than 0.0001, which indicates that Passive Communication style is negatively related to Employee Performance. Finally, the results of the indirect effect for mediation based on 5000 bootstrap samples, provided a 95% confidence interval of (-4.9739, -1.8696) which does not include a zero indicates that Leadership Styles mediates the relationship between Passive Communication style and Employee Performance.

Table 5: Mediation results (Passive CS)

Variable/ effect	β	SE	t	p	95% Confidence Interval	
					LLCI	ULCI
Passive (CS3) → LS (path 'a')	-5.0564	.815	-6.2043	.0000	-6.6587	-3.4561
LS → Perform (path 'b')	0.6510	.0708	9.1930	.0000	0.5118	0.7902
Effects						
Direct (path 'c')	-11.2928	.1933	-9.4635	.0000	-13.639	-8.9467
Indirect*	-3.2918	.7878			-4.9739	-1.8696
Total	-14.5847	1.2546	-11.6253	.0000	-17.0512	-12.1181

*Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals: 5000

The study's findings provide a significant perspective on the relationships between leadership and communication style and job performance. The study specifically intended to investigate the relationships between different types of communication styles, namely assertive, aggressive, and passive, and job performance. The results of this study's hypotheses are summarised in Table 6.

Table 6: Hypotheses results

Constructs	Hypothesis	Results
Aggressive Comm (Agg) → Job Performance (JP)	Significant and Negative	Supported
Assertive Comm (Ass) → Job Performance (JP)	Significant and Positive	Supported
Passive Comm (Pas) → Job Satisfaction (JP)	Significant and Negative	Supported
Agg → LS → JP	Does not mediate	Supported
Ass → LS → JP	Mediates	Supported
Pas → LS → JP	Mediates	Supported

The results and analysis of the first hypothesis, which examined the relationship between aggressive communication style and work performance, revealed a significant and negative association. The findings supported earlier research that associated aggressive communication with job dissatisfaction and unfavourable feelings among employees (Agarwal, 2019). A leader's ability to persuade, influence, or challenge their employees by employing an aggressive communication style negatively influences their job performance. In the second hypothesis, the relationship between an assertive communication style and job performance was examined. The findings supported other research studies indicating assertive communication is significantly and positively associated with job performance. Assertive communication encourages honest and fruitful discussion between leaders and employees (Khan et al., 2020). As a result, employee productivity is improved by assertive leaders who prioritise their employees by expressing gratitude and showing appreciation. A significant and negative relationship between passive communication style and job performance was also observed when a test was carried out to examine the results for the third hypothesis. The inability of passive communicators to articulate their ideas clearly frequently causes delays and revisions, which impair job performance (Specchia et al., 2021). The aggressive communication style's mediation study findings support the mediation hypothesis. This implies that aggressive communication styles, regardless of leadership styles, have a direct and detrimental impact on job performance. The outcomes of the mediation study for aggressive and passive communication styles indicate the reverse is true. The findings validated the mediation hypotheses for all three of these communication styles, suggesting that effective leadership can either positively influence or mitigate different communication styles (Donkor et al., 2021).

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study underlines the value of communication styles in leadership contexts and how they affect performance at work. Aggressive and passive communication styles have a negative impact, while assertive communication styles have positive impacts. In the cases of aggressive and passive communication styles, leadership styles play a significant mediating role. An assertive approach, marked by open and respectful communication, active listening, and empathy, should be adopted by leaders who are aware of their communication style. Optimising job performance also involves integrating communication and leadership styles.

The cross-sectional design of this study, which limits drawing conclusions and its causal inference, is one of the study's drawbacks. Longitudinal studies may be used in future studies to examine dynamic interplay and explore the nuanced factors that mediate and moderate the relationships between leadership and communication strategies over time (Yang et al., 2020). Further research in different settings and businesses is required to validate findings because this study could only gather responses or collect data from specific work

contexts and industries in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which may limit generalisation. It would also be noteworthy to include the moderating effects of culture and other demographic profiles of the respondents in the relationship between these variables.

To improve leadership effectiveness, organisations should integrate assertive communication styles into their leadership development programmes. Overall, employee performance can be improved by encouraging professional and open communication between employees and leaders. Training programmes should assist in the development of effective communication styles in leaders (Mwesigwa et al., 2020). By improving job satisfaction, effective leadership communication can lower employee turnover and job performance. A positive workplace culture defined by trust, respect for one another, and cooperation can be fostered through prioritising aggressive communication. Leaders ought to adapt their styles of leadership to accommodate various forms of collaborative and cross-functional teams and their communication needs. This study adds to the body of literature on the communication style and leadership paradigm by providing insight into the relationships between leadership, communication, and job performance (Obeidat & Zyod, 2015). The mediation influence of leadership styles in the relationship between communication style and work performance is supported by empirical data. The study supports communication style theories and their application in the real world. Cross-cultural studies can use this theoretical framework to examine how leadership and communication differ across various contexts.

The primary contribution of this study is its comprehensive analysis of leadership, job performance, and communication styles in businesses. Practical guidance for organisations looking to improve leadership and communication approaches to improve work performance and employee satisfaction is validated by this study. Enhancing job performance requires strong leadership and communication practises. Having a better understanding of concepts and how they interact makes the workplace more effective. This study offers a contribution by giving businesses striving to improve employee performance and satisfaction empirical evidence and recommendations.

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