

Mediating Role Of Transformational Leadership Style On The Relationship Between Strategy Formulation And Organizational Performance: Empirical Evidence From The Uae

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Abstract: An effective leadership style improves organizational performance. There have been limited studies focused on leadership style as mediator construct particularly from the UAE context. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the effect of strategy formulation on organizational performance. Also, determine the mediating role of transformational leadership style on the relationship between strategy formulation and organizational performance in the UAE. A quantitative research approach was used with survey questionnaires as a tool for data collection. The target respondents were managers, head of department and Administration supervisor from the UAE Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure. A total of 351 valid samples were used for the analysis. The PLS-SEM analysis revealed that strategy formulation had a negative effect on organizational performance. The results showed that transformational leadership had significant and positive effects on organizational performance. Also, the findings revealed that transformational leadership fully mediates the relationship between strategy formulation and organizational performance. The results of this study provide extended insights into strategic management practices, and leadership style towards better organizational performance in the UAE public organizations context.

Keywords: Strategy formulation, leadership style, organizational performance, UAE

1. INTRODUCTION

Organizational performance is based upon the idea that an organization is the voluntary association of productive assets, including human, physical, and capital resources, to achieve a shared purpose (Ali, 2020). In addition, organizations are experiencing the challenges of understanding the factors that have significant and positive relationship on their performance (Ali, 2020). Therefore, the organizational performance improvement needs some measurements to determine the extent of effectiveness of organizational recourses on performance (Al-Dhaafri and Yusoff, 2014). Measurement of performance is very important for effective management in any organization. Thus, improvement of any process cannot be done without measuring its outcomes (Nusari, 2020).

According to Lyu et al. (2019) organizations must not focus on a single strategy and rather unique administrative policies need be created based on the specific situation they are currently experiencing. Ojha et al., (2020) pointed that that the success of an organization is dependent on the selection of strategies and recommended strategic administration as an approach to obtain better performance in the organization. It specifies that the strategic management method is one of the crucial means by which an effective organizational performance can be achieved (Ojha et al., 2020).

The UAE public organizations sector are facing a variety of challenges in their public administrative issues, such as poor productivity, exploitation, and lack of changes and this hinder the improvement of the organizational performance (Khairi et al., 2024). To add to this, Khalifa et al (2022) mentioned that the UAE public organizations facing challenges to meet the expectation goal. This is due to lack of alignment between strategy and operation management and as well as applied performance measures are inadequate, which necessitate the adoption of strategic management practices (Khalifa et al., 2022; Khalid et al., 2024).

Previous research from the UAE context mostly examined the direct effect of strategic management practice on performance (Katheeri, 2016); Alsuwaidi, (2017); (Elbanna, 2020); (Suwaidi, 2018); (Hassan et al., 2018); (Khalifa, 2019); (Mohamed, 2019); (Maazmi, 2021). However, there is lack of studies that examine the

mediating role of transformational leadership style between strategy formulation and organizational performance from the UAE context particularly among public organizations. Therefore, this study aims to address this knowledge gap by examining the mediating effect of transformational leadership style between strategy formulation and organizational performance.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategy formulation refers to the mission, objectives, strategies, goals, policy and guidelines of an organization (Samad *et al.*, 2018). It includes the identification of external opportunities and threats, determination of internal strengths and weaknesses and choosing the best strategy to be implemented (Samad *et al.*, 2018). Well formulated strategy plays an important role for organizational performance (Ongonge, 2013). Meanwhile, strategy implementation initiates activities in accordance with formulation strategy and to successfully executes the formulated strategy. It also deals with the allocation of the resources and motivation for the staff to achieve the objectives of their organization (Esmaeil *et al.*, 2013). Hence, strategy implementation as a vital aspect towards achieving better organizational performance compared to other strategies (Samad *et al.*, 2018). As in this stage organizations are able to reap the outcomes from the formulation strategy (Muchira, 2013). The last stage of the strategy is the strategy evaluation, it is the process in which actual activities and performance results of an organization are monitored and evaluated based on desired performance (David, 2012; Wheelen & Hunger, 2012).

According to Akinyele & Fasogbon (2015) strategy formulation improved the survival of performance of public organizations. Equally, Franklin (2011) stated that strategy formulation and performance of non-profit and government organizations are significantly connected. In addition, strategy formulation processes have been also highlighted to be related to superior organizational performance. However, poor overall strategic management may result in inefficient use of resources and organizational destabilization (Samad *et al.*, 2018). Besides, Aldehayyat & Twaissi (2011) added that formulation strategy has been proven to improve the small and big organizational performance. The formulation strategy including policies, vision, mission, goals, and strategic choice (Samad *et al.*, 2018). Therefore, these elements are important determined of organizational performance (Samad, Yusuf, Ahmed & Yakub, 2015). Organizations whether for-profit or non-profit, private or public have found it necessary to engage in strategic management in order to achieve their organizational goals (Kitonga, 2017). Hence, a wise organization need to formulate a strategy that is appropriate for the organization, appropriate for the industry, and appropriate for the situation (Owich *et al.*, 2018).

3. Hypothesis development

Prior studies have shown that there is a significant correlation between strategy formulation and organizational performance. for example, Samad *et al* (2018) unraveled the effects of strategic management (i.e., formulation and implementation strategy) and organizational culture on organizational performance. Also, it determined the most triggering predictor of organizational performance. The results revealed that the performance of government organizations was impacted by organizational culture, dimensions of formulation and implementation strategy (Samad *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, Moses and Theresa (2021) investigated the effect of strategy formulation, strategy implementations and strategic evaluation on organizational performance. The results that strategic management practices had significant positive effect on organizational performance. Therefore, the study recommends that environmental scanning should be in line with the objective of the organization in other to achieve organizational objective and effective employee performance, also organization should seek more input from the lower level managers and supervisors when formulating strategy so that the formulated plans are effective in line with both long and short term objectives of the organization and organizations should have a well-conceived strategic vision that must be communicated to all employees (Moses and Theresa, 2021). Also, Yusuf (2014) who the influence of strategic planning on organizational performance. The study used strategy formulation (i.e., policies, vision, mission, goals, and strategic choice) to be important for organizational performance. Based on this premise and previous literature, they examined the links between three main dimensions of formulation: vision, mission, and goals on performance of government organizations.

Despite the empirical evidence that leadership style had significant and positive effect on the organizational performance ((Buil *et al.*, 2019; Langat *et al.*, 2019; Raman *et al.*, 2020; Sung & Kim, 2021; Wilkins & Emik, 2021; Almehairbi *et al.*, 2022). Hence, leadership has become a critical element in the success of an organization (Raman *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, transformational leaders generate a greater involvement in the work of subordinates (Toufaily, 2018). However, there is lack of study that explores the mediating effect of transformational leadership on the relationship between Strategy formulation and Organizational performance. Therefore, the conceptual framework with corresponding research hypotheses is proposed as shown in Figure 1.

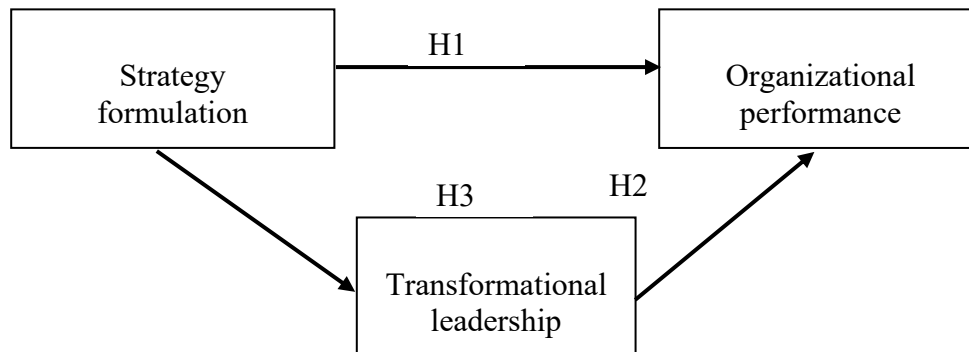


Figure 1: Proposed research framework

H₁: There is a positive relationship between strategy formulation and organizational performance.
H₂: There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance.
H₂: There is a mediating effect of transformational leadership on the relationship between strategy formulation and organizational performance.

4. METHODOLOGY

In this research a quantitative survey research design was applied to investigate the effect of strategy formulation on organizational performance. Additionally, determine the mediating role of transformational leadership style on the relationship between strategy formulation on organizational performance in the UAE public organization. The data was collected from 351 managers / head of department and Administration supervisor from the UAE Ministry of Energy & Infrastructure.

The instrumentation was adopted from previous related studies; for strategy formulation 12 items were adopted from Isaac (2016); Nusari (2020); Aldhaheri *et al* (2020). While for transformational leadership which was measured based on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire MLQ-5X that was originally proposed by Avolio *et al.*, (1999; Bass and Bass (2009). For this study 10 items were adopted from Alsayed *et al* (2020); Al Dhanhani and Abdullah (2021). Each dimension of transformational leadership comprises of 5 items (i.e., idealized influence and inspirational motivation). Lastly, the organizational performance 12 items were adopted from Nusari (2020); Maazmi,(2021). Moreover, the data was analysis using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) as a method for structural equation modeling that allows estimation of complex cause-effect relationships in path models with latent variables (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

5. Key findings

5.1 Measurement model analysis

In PLS-SEM analysis, the first step is the measurement model assessment, it describes the relationship between a latent variable and its indicators. The measurement model specifies the relationship between observable variables and the underlying variables (Alazeezi and Zainol, 2022). The main aspects in this step that should examine are internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability and average variance extracted

(AVE)) and factor loading (Hair et al., 2017). Table 1 shows the results of the validity and reliability of the scale items.

Table 1: Constructs Reliability and Validity

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Organizational Performance	0.960	0.965	0.697
Strategy Formulation	0.948	0.954	0.635
Vision	0.919	0.943	0.805
Mission	0.887	0.923	0.750
Goals	0.898	0.929	0.768
Transformational Leadership	0.909	0.930	0.590
Idealize Influence	0.873	0.909	0.671
Inspirational Motivation	0.921	0.944	0.809

The results revealed that all constructs achieved values ranging between 0.873 and 0.960 for Cronbach's alpha. Moreover, all constructs achieved values ranging between 0.909 and 0.965 for Composite reliability. Therefore, the model of this research has internal consistency reliability. next, Figure 2 shows the factor loading result.

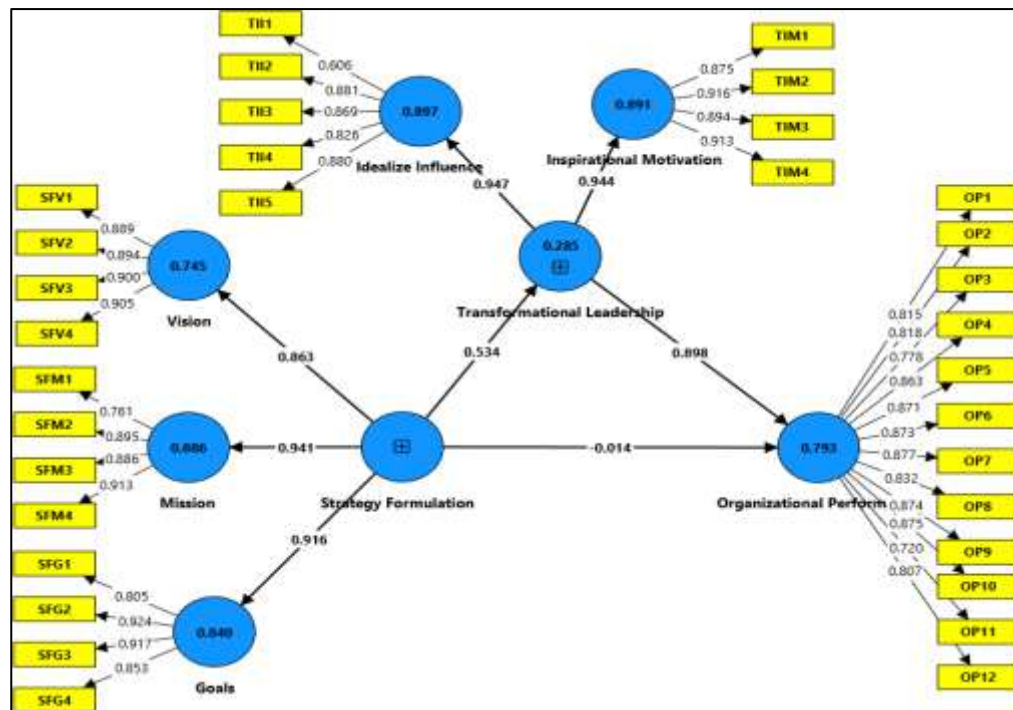


Figure 2: Measurement model

The factor loading results; factor loading is known as the indicator's absolute contribution to the construct, and the indicators are presumed to be highly correlated (Ghasemy et al., 2020). As a result, all the items' values are greater than 0.6. Therefore, constructs of the study above the suggested threshold values (Hair et al., 2019). Moreover, to proceed with the evaluation of the structural model, collinearity assessment, and significance and relevance of structural relationships should be performed (Hair et al., 2019).

5.2 Structural model

After establishing the validity and reliability of the measurement model, it then follows that the structural model needs to be assessed. The structural model provides a means of assessing the inte-relationship in the

measurement model to establish causal associations or simply show the relationships between the independent variables toward the dependent variable and the mediating indicator that might facilitated the link between exogenous constructs and the endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2019). Table 2 presented results collinearity issues.

Table 2: Evaluation of Collinearity based on the Variance inflation factor

Constructs	Organizational Performance	Strategy Formulation	Transformational Leadership
Organizational Performance			
Strategy Formulation	1.399		1.000
Transformational Leadership	1.399		

The result shows that all Evaluation of Collinearity based on the Variance inflation factor (VIF) values are clearly below the limit of 5.0, therefore, it can conclude that there are no collinearity issues. Therefore, the hypotheses testing (path coefficients) of the direct results presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Significance test for the structural model path coefficient, t-statistics and p-values

Direct hypothesis	Path	Std Error	T-Value	P-Value	Finding
Strategy Formulation -> Organizational Performance	-0.014	0.027	0.504	0.614	Not supports
Transformational Leadership -> Organizational Performance	0.898	0.019	47.002	0.000	Supported

The results of the p-values were interpreted as follows: $p < 0.001$ indicates very highly statistically significant relationship (Concepci and Serrano-bedia, 2020). The path coefficient or estimates from the structural model relationship have standardized values that typically ranges between -1 and +1, with path coefficient close to +1 representing a strong positive relationship (Hair et al., 2020). In contrast, path coefficient values close to -1 represents a strong negative relationship (Hair et al., 2020). Whereas to ascertain the t-value exceeding the t-critical value of 1.96 means there is an effect between latent variables (Shmueli et al., 2019). The results showed that strategy formulation and strategy evaluation had a negative effect on organizational performance as the path coefficient values close to -1 represents a strong negative relationship with t-value not exceeding the t-critical value of 1.96 and p-values value greater than 0.05. (Hair et al., 2016). The structural model with Coefficient of Determination (R2) presented in Figure 3 below.

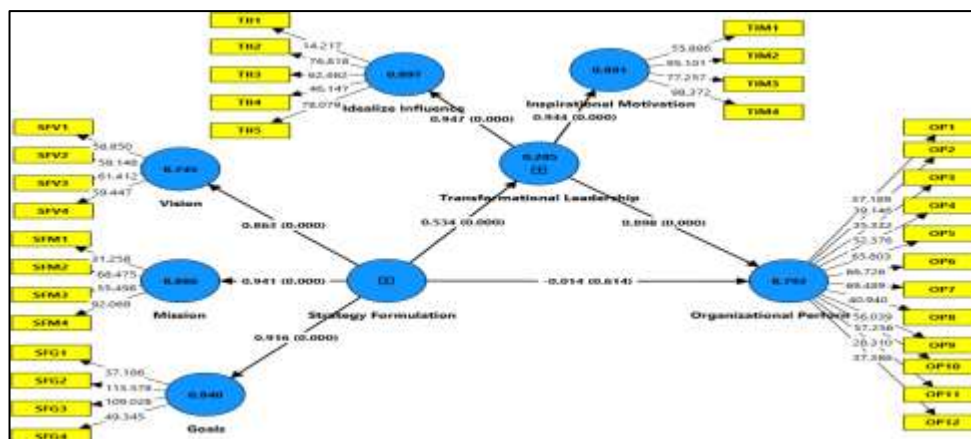


Figure 3: Final Structural Model

Expectedly, transformational leadership revealed significant and positive effects toward organizational performance as shown in Table 3. In addition, the mediating results of the Transformational Leadership on the relationship between Strategy Formulation and Organizational Performance is presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Mediating results

Mediating hypothesis	Path	Std Error	T-Value	P-Value	Finding
Strategy Formulation -> Transformational Leadership -> Organizational Performance	0.480	0.038	12.596	0.000	Mediated

The specific indirect effects results showed that transformational leadership mediates the relationship between strategy formulation and organizational performance. Although the relationship between strategy evaluation and organizational performance is negative and the research hypothesis was rejected, this relationship had improved with the interaction of the transformational leadership as mediator indicator.

6. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Unexpectedly, the analysis revealed that strategy formulation does not significantly effect organizational performance; therefore, the research H1 was not supported with ($\beta = -0.014$, $t = 0.504$, $p = 0.614$). According to Hair *et al* (2020) t-statistic value must be greater than 1.96 to confirm the significant effect between latent variables. Thus, the current study is unable to confirm a positive relationship between strategy formulation and organizational performance. This finding is in line with that of Oladokun *et al* (2019) who investigated the roles of strategy formulation, adoption and implementation on organizational performance. The results showed that strategy formulation has no sufficient impact on organizational performance. However, Nusari (2020) examine the impact of strategy formulation on operational performance in the context of public sector in the UAE. The results proved that there is a significant impact of the three components of strategic planning on operational performance.

The results showed that transformational leadership style had a significant and positive effect on organizational performance; implying that there is a direct significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance in the UAE Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure. This finding is consistent with that of Alhashedi *et al* (2021) investigated the effect of transformational leadership behavior organizational citizenship behaviors on organizational performance in Jaddah, Saudi Arabian. The results showed that transformational leadership behavior significantly influences organizational performance. Also, Alazeezi and Zainol (2022) investigated the effect of transformative leadership on organizational citizenship behavior in Abu Dhabi in UAE. The study concludes that transformative leadership can improve the organizational citizenship behavior in the corporate sector of Abu Dhabi.

Interestingly, the empirical results revealed that transformational leadership significantly mediates the relationship between strategy formulation and organizational performance. The result supported by the analysis of Almandeel (2017) who determined the mediating effect of leadership styles on the relationship between employees' personality types and turnover intention in the banks of Saudi Arabia. The results showed that transformational leadership and transactional leadership mediated the relationship between personality types and turnover intention.

In conclusion, the present research result suggests that the UAE Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure needs to restructure their actual method and strategy of the strategic planning / formulation by adding more innovative technique to enhance the strategy formulation process. Good strategic planning will give a significant benefit to organizations like increased productivity and better corporate governance. Besides, for the organization to thrive well in this modern contemporary age there is need for them to embrace strategic

planning in its fullness. Previous empirical research has shown that strategy formulation is an important driver of organizational performance as it can generate the organization into innovative and proactive actions. The current study's findings revealed that strategic management practices namely strategy formulation strategy implementation and strategy evaluation are positively correlated with organizational performance through the mediating role of transformational leadership in the UAE ministry of energy and infrastructure. Therefore, the ministry needs to encourage the practice of transformational leadership behaviors by developing a set of special regulations and instructions and considering the style of leaders as one of the important criteria in improving performance of the organization.

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