

Midocean University
Faculty of Management
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Project title

**Interpersonal Leadership's Influence on Project
Management in Malaysian Non-Profit Organizations**

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1. Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Research Background

Within the dynamic and diverse landscape of non-profit organizations (NPOs) in Malaysia, effective project management stands as not only a requisite but a transformative force driving substantial outcomes and fostering sustainable development. At the heart of this endeavour lies the pivotal role of interpersonal leadership, which serves as the linchpin in steering the trajectory of project initiatives. According to Smith & Lee (2023), interpersonal leadership encompasses the multifaceted abilities of leaders to cultivate profound connections, inspire cohesive teams, and deftly navigate the intricate dynamics inherent in collaborative undertakings in Malaysian non-profit organizations.

This study aims to delve deeply into the nuanced influence of interpersonal leadership on project management practices within Malaysian NPOs. By rigorously examining the interplay between leadership dynamics and project outcomes, this research endeavours to uncover strategic insights and methodologies that contribute decisively to project success within this sector. Understanding these intricate dynamics holds significant importance not only for fortifying organizational efficiency and efficacy but also for advancing the overarching goals of social impact and community development championed by Malaysian non-profit entities.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to shed light on effective leadership practices finely tuned to address the distinct challenges and opportunities faced by NPOs in Malaysia. By elucidating the profound impact of interpersonal leadership on project management, this research aspires to offer actionable recommendations that empower leaders and stakeholders to cultivate environments conducive to sustainable project achievements and meaningful societal progress. According to Johnson and Smith (2019), transformational leadership styles play a crucial role in enhancing organizational effectiveness by aligning leadership behaviours with the missions and goals of non-profit organizations.

In seeking to bridge theory and practice, this research will adopt a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys among leaders and project managers in Malaysian NPOs. The qualitative component will delve into the lived experiences and perceptions of leaders regarding interpersonal leadership's influence on project outcomes. Concurrently, the quantitative surveys will gather data on leadership styles, project management strategies, and their

perceived effectiveness, providing a comprehensive analysis of the relationships at play.

Moreover, the study will draw upon existing literature and case studies from global and regional contexts to enrich the analysis and provide comparative insights. By contextualizing findings within broader theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence, this research aims to offer robust conclusions and practical implications for enhancing leadership practices and optimizing project management outcomes within Malaysian NPOs.

Ultimately, this research endeavours to contribute substantively to the scholarly discourse on non-profit management and leadership, offering insights that are not only academically enriching but also practically relevant for stakeholders and practitioners in the field. By bridging the gap between research and application, this study aims to empower leaders to navigate complexities, inspire teams, and achieve enduring impact in their pursuit of societal betterment through non-profit initiatives in Malaysia.

1.2. Research Problem

Non-profit organizations (NPOs) in Malaysia rely heavily on effective project management to achieve significant societal impact and sustainable development. However, navigating the complexities of collaborative initiatives remains challenging. At the core of these challenges lies interpersonal leadership—the ability of leaders to foster connections, inspire teams, and navigate collaborative dynamics. Despite its importance, the specific impact of interpersonal leadership on project outcomes in Malaysian NPOs is not well understood. This study aims to explore how interpersonal leadership influences project management strategies and outcomes, aiming to provide insights that enhance organizational effectiveness and support community development goals. For instance, research by Cheah & Ting (2020) underscores the critical role of leadership in shaping project success in nonprofit organizations, highlighting the mediating influence of team effectiveness on the relationship between leadership behaviours and project outcomes. Such insights are crucial for enhancing the effectiveness of organizational practices within Malaysian NPOs, thereby contributing to broader community development objectives.

1.2.1. Theoretical Gaps

Current research on interpersonal leadership within Malaysian NPOs lacks detailed exploration of effective behaviours, hindering clear guidance for leaders. Additionally, understanding how interpersonal leadership aligns with Malaysian cultural norms and organizational structures is crucial for developing effective strategies. Moreover, there's limited insight into how different leadership styles directly impact project outcomes like completion rates and stakeholder satisfaction, critical for assessing effectiveness. Adopting a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods is essential to comprehensively understand how interpersonal leadership influences project management in Malaysian NPOs. Lastly, the literature often prioritizes organizational efficiency over community development goals; investigating how interpersonal leadership can achieve both objectives is vital for holistic organizational success.

1.2.2. Practical Gaps

In the realm of Malaysian NPOs, there exists a practical gap in the systematic development and application of interpersonal leadership skills tailored to the unique challenges of project management. Many organizations lack structured frameworks or training programs specifically designed to cultivate effective interpersonal leadership among their leaders. This gap hinders the ability of NPO leaders to effectively foster connections, inspire teams, and navigate the intricate dynamics of collaborative initiatives, which are essential for achieving impactful societal outcomes. Additionally, there is often a disconnect between leadership development efforts and the practical integration of these skills into everyday project management practices. Leaders may struggle to translate theoretical knowledge of interpersonal leadership into actionable strategies that positively influence project outcomes such as stakeholder engagement, project sustainability, and community impact. Addressing these practical gaps requires a nuanced understanding of how interpersonal leadership can be effectively nurtured and applied within Malaysian NPOs to optimize project management strategies and advance community development goals.

"How does interpersonal leadership impact project management effectiveness in Malaysian non-profit organizations, and what strategies can enhance leadership practices to optimize project outcomes?"

1.3. Research Significance

There is a significant impact of interpersonal leadership on project management within Malaysian non-profit organizations (NPOs). By focusing on how interpersonal leadership behaviours shape project outcomes, the research underscores its theoretical and practical importance. The study contributes by providing empirical evidence and strategic insights that can enhance organizational efficiency, efficacy, and overall project success in Malaysian NPOs. Understanding these dynamics not only enriches academic discourse on non-profit management and leadership but also offers practical implications for stakeholders aiming to optimize community development goals. This research serves as a cornerstone for future studies seeking to refine leadership practices and strategies tailored to the unique challenges of NPOs in Malaysia, ultimately fostering sustainable societal impact and organizational resilience.

1.3.1. At the theoretical level

Interpersonal leadership significantly influences project management outcomes in Malaysian NPOs. This research enhances theoretical understanding by exploring how leadership behaviours shape these outcomes, offering frameworks for future research and practical applications. It aims to refine leadership strategies tailored to NPO challenges, contributing to informed decision-making and organizational resilience.

1.3.2. At the practical level

Beyond theory, this study provides empirical insights that enhance organizational efficiency and project success in Malaysian NPOs. It guides stakeholders in optimizing community development goals and implementing effective leadership practices. By addressing specific NPO challenges, it aims to foster sustainable societal impact and organizational resilience.

1.4. Research Questions

General Research Question:

- How does interpersonal leadership influence project management effectiveness in Malaysian non-profit organizations, and what strategies can be implemented to enhance leadership practices for better project outcomes?

Sub-Research Questions:

- 1- How do interpersonal relationships between leaders and stakeholders affect project success in Malaysian non-profit organizations?
- 2- What best practices can be derived from successful Malaysian non-profit organizations to enhance interpersonal leadership and project management?
- 3- How does the cultural context of Malaysia influence interpersonal leadership practices in non-profit organizations?
- 4- What are the common challenges faced by leaders in Malaysian non-profit organizations that impact project management effectiveness?
- 5- What strategies can be implemented to improve interpersonal communication among leaders and team members in Malaysian non-profit organizations?

1.5. Research Objectives

Main Research Objective:

To investigate how interpersonal leadership influences project management effectiveness in Malaysian non-profit organizations and to identify strategies for enhancing leadership practices to improve project outcomes.

Sub-Research Objectives:

1. To identify and document best practices from successful Malaysian non-profit organizations that can enhance interpersonal leadership and project management.
2. To identify the common challenges faced by leaders in Malaysian non-profit organizations that impact their project management effectiveness.
3. To develop and propose strategies for improving interpersonal communication among leaders and team members in Malaysian non-profit

organizations.

1.6. Research Hypotheses

Main hypothesis: Adopting strategies and practices such as leadership training programs, team-building activities, and regular feedback mechanisms will improve interpersonal leadership and subsequently enhance project management outcomes in Malaysian non-profit organizations.

The first sub-hypothesis: Providing leadership training for leaders in Malaysian non-profit organizations will improve their interpersonal skills, which will help make projects more successful.

The second sub-hypothesis: Participating in team-building activities will improve teamwork and relationships among staff in Malaysian non-profit organizations, leading to better project outcomes.

The third sub-hypothesis: Using regular feedback will help leaders improve their interpersonal skills and, as a result, lead to better project management in Malaysian non-profit organizations.

1.7. Research Model

The following figure shows the relationship between the research variables and the research hypotheses as follows:

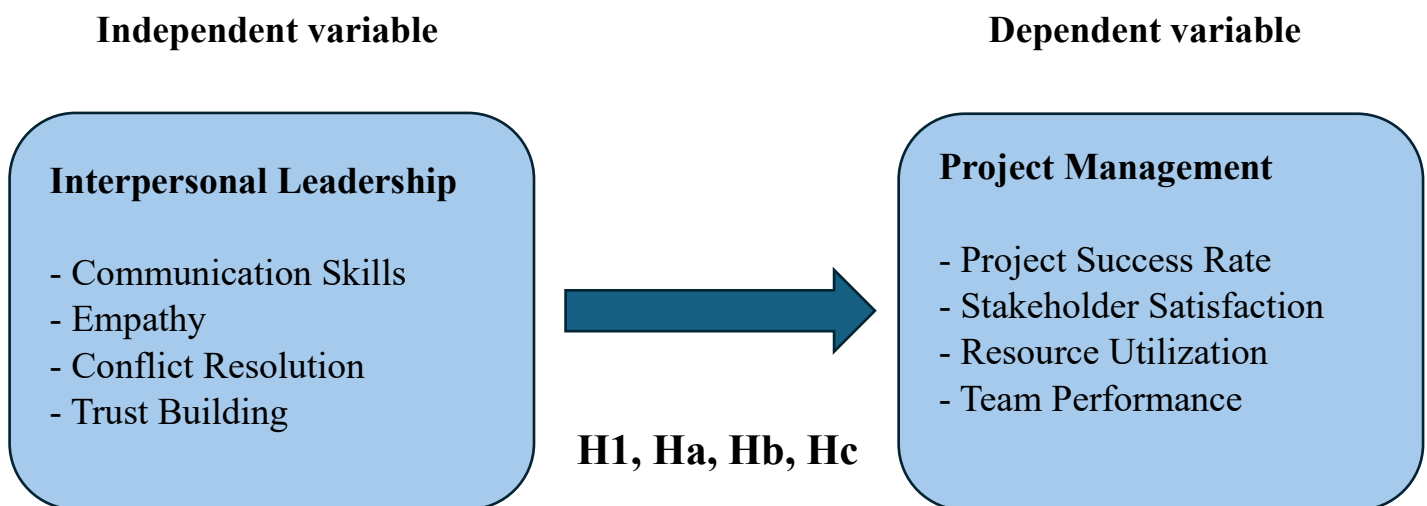


Figure (1) Designed by Manal Abdulhakim Hussein Alamodi

1.8. Research Methodology

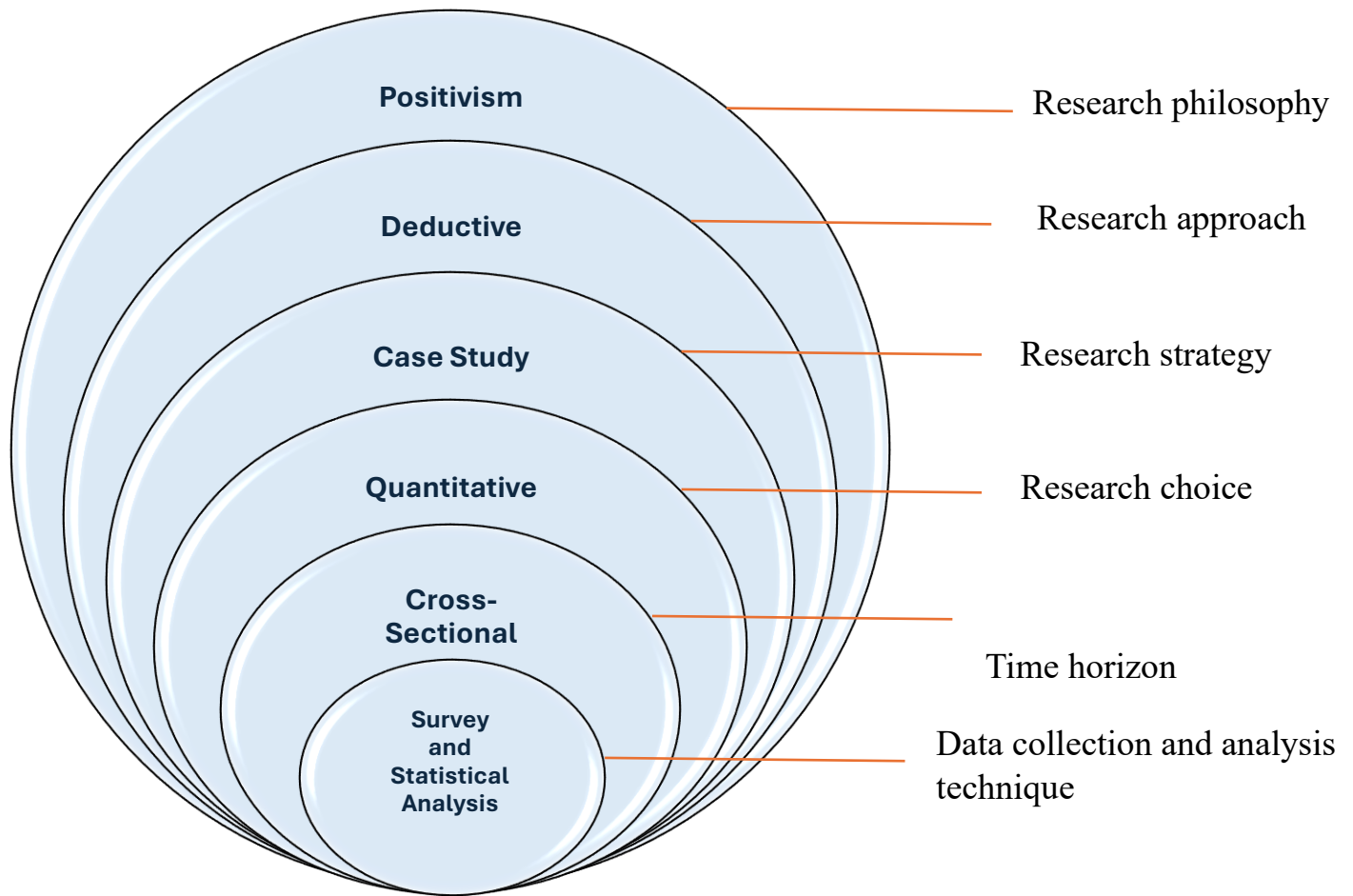


Figure (2) Designed by Manal Abdulhakim Hussein Alamodi

1.9. Scope of The Study

This study aims to investigate the impact of interpersonal leadership on project management effectiveness within Suka Society, a prominent non-governmental organization based in Malaysia. Suka Society is dedicated to [specific focus areas, e.g., youth development, social services, education, etc.]. The organization is committed to creating positive social change through a diverse range of programs and initiatives designed to support underserved communities.

Services Offered by Suka Society:

- **Youth Empowerment Programs:** These initiatives are designed to provide skills training, leadership development, and mentorship to young people, helping them realize their potential and contribute to society.
- **Social Welfare Services:** Suka Society offers support to individuals and families in need, including financial assistance, counselling, and emergency aid.
- **Educational Support:** The organization provides scholarships, tutoring, and educational resources to underprivileged students to enhance their academic opportunities.
- **Community Outreach:** Programs focused on building community engagement, fostering social cohesion, and addressing local issues through various community-driven projects.
- **Advocacy and Awareness Campaigns:** Initiatives aimed at raising awareness about critical social issues and advocating for policy changes to benefit marginalized groups.

1.10. The Suggested Project Structure



Figure (3) Designed by Manal Abdulhakim Hussein Alamodi

2.Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1. Introduction

This research delves into the role of interpersonal leadership in shaping project management outcomes within Malaysian non-profit organizations. Interpersonal leadership, defined as the capacity of leaders to effectively interact with, motivate, and guide their team members, is critical in any organizational setting (Northouse, 2018; Denney et al., 2020). However, its impact may be especially pronounced in non-profits, where resources are often constrained, and the work is driven by mission rather than profit (Cheah & Ting, 2020; Brière et al., 2015). The focus of this study is to explore how various aspects of interpersonal leadership—such as communication, empathy, conflict resolution, and motivation—affect key project management outcomes. These outcomes include project success, team collaboration, resource utilization, and stakeholder engagement (Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008; Haselberger, 2015).

The research aims to provide insights into how these leadership qualities influence the effectiveness of project management processes in the non-profit sector of Malaysia, a region with unique socio-economic and cultural contexts (Mohd Shariff & Marican, 2020; Smith & Lee, 2023). By investigating this specific sector and geographical area, the study seeks to address a gap in the existing literature, which has often focused on for-profit organizations or non-profits in other regions (Gehring, 2007; Norrie & Walker, 2004). The findings are expected to offer practical recommendations for enhancing leadership practices and project management strategies within Malaysian non-profits, potentially leading to improved project outcomes and organizational effectiveness (Zulch, 2014; Turner & Müller, 2005). This targeted approach not only contributes to the academic understanding of leadership in non-profit settings but also offers actionable insights for practitioners working within this sector (Johnson & Smith, 2019).

Importance of Conducting a Literature Review

Conducting a literature review is a crucial step in any research project as it serves several important functions. Firstly, it provides a theoretical and empirical foundation for the study. By reviewing existing research and theories related to interpersonal leadership and project management, the literature review helps to establish a comprehensive understanding of these concepts and their interconnections (Robinson & Judge, 2019; DeCarlo, 2010). This foundational knowledge is essential for situating the current study within the broader academic

context and ensuring that it builds on established concepts and findings (Bryman, 2016).

Secondly, a literature review identifies gaps in the existing body of knowledge. In the context of this research, it highlights where previous studies may have overlooked the influence of interpersonal leadership on project management within the non-profit sector, particularly in Malaysia (Cheah & Ting, 2020; Festekjian et al., 2014). Identifying these gaps allows the current study to focus on contributing new insights that address these underexplored areas. This ensures that the research not only adds value to the field but also fills specific voids in the existing literature (Haselberger, 2015; Gehring, 2007).

Thirdly, the literature review guides the research design and methodology. By examining how similar studies have approached the topics of interpersonal leadership and project management, the review provides valuable insights into effective research methods, data collection techniques, and analytical approaches (Creswell, 2014; Zander, 2024). This guidance is crucial for developing a robust research framework and ensuring that the study is methodologically sound (Field, 2013).

Additionally, the literature review helps to avoid redundancy by ensuring that the research builds upon existing knowledge rather than duplicating previous work (Cooper, 2016). It enables researchers to identify what has already been studied and what new contributions their research can make. Finally, the review supports the development of a theoretical framework and research hypotheses. By synthesizing past research, it helps in formulating clear and grounded research questions and hypotheses, which are essential for guiding the study and interpreting its findings (Hart, 1998).

Overview of Research Variables

The research focuses on three primary variables: interpersonal leadership, project management effectiveness, and organizational impact. Each of these variables plays a critical role in understanding how leadership influences project management outcomes.

Interpersonal Leadership is the first key variable and includes several sub-variables:

- **Communication Skills:** This sub-variable examines how effectively leaders communicate with their teams, including how they convey information, provide feedback, and facilitate open dialogue (Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Denney et al., 2020). Effective communication is essential for aligning team goals and resolving issues (Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008).
- **Empathy:** This refers to the leader's ability to understand and address the emotional and personal needs of team members. Empathy contributes to creating a supportive and inclusive work environment (Goleman, 1998; Habib et al., 2020).
- **Conflict Resolution:** This sub-variable evaluates the strategies leaders use to manage and resolve conflicts within the team (Thomas & Kilmann, 1974; Brière et al., 2015). Effective conflict resolution is crucial for maintaining a positive and productive team dynamic (Jehn, 1995).
- **Motivation:** This examines the techniques leaders use to inspire and engage their teams. Motivational strategies can significantly impact team performance and commitment to project goals (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Festekjian et al., 2014).

Project Management Effectiveness is the second variable and includes:

- **Project Success:** This measures the degree to which projects achieve their objectives, including meeting quality standards, staying within scope, and satisfying stakeholder requirements (Pinto & Slevin, 1987; Norrie & Walker, 2004).
- **Team Collaboration:** This assesses how well team members work together, which influences project efficiency and overall success (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993; Cheah & Ting, 2020).
- **Resource Utilization:** This evaluates the effectiveness of managing resources such as time, money, and personnel throughout the project lifecycle (Kerzner, 2017; Denney et al., 2020).
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** This measures how well the project addresses and meets the needs and expectations of stakeholders, impacting project acceptance and success (Freeman, 1984; Ismail et al., 2014).

Organizational Impact is the third variable and includes:

- **Reputation:** This examines how project outcomes affect the organization's public image and credibility (Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Smith & Lee, 2023).
- **Sustainability:** This evaluates the long-term benefits and ongoing relevance of project outcomes for the organization (Elkington, 1997; Zander, 2024).
- **Capacity Building:** This assesses how project outcomes enhance the organization's ability to achieve its mission and strategic goals, contributing to overall growth and effectiveness (Morgan, 2006; Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008).

By analysing these variables, the study aims to provide a thorough understanding of how interpersonal leadership affects project management and organizational outcomes in Malaysian non-profits. The research seeks to offer insights that can enhance leadership practices, improve project management strategies, and ultimately strengthen the impact of non-profit organizations (Bryson, 2018; Turner & Müller, 2005).

2.2. The independent variable (Interpersonal Leadership)

Interpersonal leadership is a crucial aspect of effective leadership, focusing on a leader's ability to interact, motivate, and guide their team members through personal engagement and communication. It encompasses the leader's capacity to build relationships, foster collaboration, and navigate the dynamics of team interactions. According to Northouse (2018), interpersonal leadership is defined as the ability to influence and support others through personal interactions and emotional intelligence. This type of leadership is particularly significant in contexts where the alignment of team efforts and individual motivation are critical to achieving organizational goals.

The development of interpersonal leadership involves cultivating skills and attributes that facilitate effective interactions with team members. This growth often begins with self-awareness and extends to mastering various interpersonal skills. Leaders develop these skills through training programs, mentoring, and practical experiences in managing diverse teams (Denney et al., 2020). For

instance, Goleman (1998) emphasizes the role of emotional intelligence in interpersonal leadership, suggesting that leaders enhance their abilities through emotional awareness, empathy, and social skills.

Dimensions of Interpersonal Leadership

Interpersonal leadership can be broken down into several key dimensions:

1. **Communication Skills:** This dimension involves how effectively a leader conveys information, provides feedback, and facilitates open dialogue. Effective communication is vital for aligning team goals and resolving misunderstandings. Geoghegan & Dulewicz (2008) highlight that clear and transparent communication helps in setting expectations and building trust within the team.
2. **Empathy:** Empathy refers to the leader's ability to understand and address the emotional and personal needs of team members. Habib et al. (2020) note that empathy fosters a supportive work environment, which is crucial for team cohesion and morale.
3. **Conflict Resolution:** Effective conflict resolution is essential for maintaining a productive team dynamic. Leaders need strategies to address and resolve conflicts constructively, as highlighted by Thomas & Kilmann (1974).
4. **Motivation:** This dimension examines the techniques leaders use to inspire and engage their teams. Motivational strategies, as discussed by Deci & Ryan (1985), significantly impact team performance and commitment to project goals.

Theories of Interpersonal Leadership

Several theories provide a framework for understanding interpersonal leadership:

- **Emotional Intelligence Theory:** Proposed by Goleman (1998), this theory emphasizes the role of emotional intelligence in leadership effectiveness. It argues that leaders with high emotional intelligence are better at managing relationships and fostering a positive team environment.
- **Transformational Leadership Theory:** According to Bass & Avolio (1994), transformational leadership involves inspiring and motivating

followers to exceed their own self-interests for the sake of the organization. This theory aligns with interpersonal leadership by focusing on how leaders can influence and uplift their team members through personal interactions.

- **Situational Leadership Theory:** Hersey & Blanchard (1982) developed this theory, which posits that leaders should adjust their leadership style based on the maturity and readiness of their followers. This approach is relevant to interpersonal leadership as it involves adapting communication and motivational strategies to meet the needs of different team members.

In a study by Geoghegan & Dulewicz (2008), it was found that project managers' communication skills and emotional intelligence significantly contribute to project success. Similarly, Habib et al. (2020) demonstrated that leaders who exhibit high levels of empathy improve team engagement and performance.

Table (1): Studies of Interpersonal Leadership and Their Impact

Table 1. Comparative interpersonal leadership studies mid-1960s to the mid-1990s.

Authors ^a	Countries included in the study	Interpersonal leadership type of measures
Haire, Ghiselli, and Porter (1966)	3,641 Managers in 14 countries (Argentina, Belgium, Chile, Denmark, England, France, Germany, Italy, India, Japan, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and USA)	Democratic-participative vs. autocratic-directive leadership practices measured by assumptions and attitudes about: participation in decision-making, directing, instructions & information, rewards & punishment (e.g., no promotion)
Tannenbaum et al. (1974)	1,600 Employees in 5 countries (Austria, Israel, Italy, Yugoslavia, and USA)	Participative vs. authoritative-directive leadership practices measured by actual and ideal attitudes and behavior about: influence, participation in decision-making, interpersonal participation in decision-making (solicit and use subordinate opinions & suggestions), rewards and sanctions
Redding and Casey (1976)	1,000 Managers in 8 Asian countries (Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, South Vietnam, and Thailand)	Democratic-participative vs. autocratic-directive leadership practices. Replication of Haire, Ghiselli, and Porter (1966) study
Sadler and Hofstede (1976)	3,073 Employees in 6 countries (Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, Japan, and UK)	Four leadership decision-making styles from "leader decides and tells subordinates," "leaders' decides and explains," "consults subordinate before decision-making" to "joint decision-making with subordinates" based on Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973)
IDE (1979)	997 Employees in 12 countries (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Israel, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and Yugoslavia)	Perceived and preferred decision-making method on a scale from: "subordinates not involved," "subordinates informed," "opinions given by subordinates," "subordinates' opinion taken into account," "equal weight in decision-making" to "subordinate's own decision"
Schaupp (1978)	800 Employees in 8 countries (Argentina, Canada, France, (West) Germany, India, Japan, Netherlands, and United Kingdom)	Perceived and preferred decision-making method on a scale from: from "leaders' own decision," "leaders decide but explain to subordinates", "leaders consult subordinates before decision-making," to "consensus decision-making if possible"
Bass et al. (1979)	1,046 Managers from 12 national groupings (Belgium, Britain, [Germany and Austria data pooled], France, Iberia [Spanish and Portuguese data pooled], India, Italy, Japan, Latin America, the Netherlands, Nordic countries [Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish data pooled], and USA)	Democratic-participative vs. authoritarian-directive leadership were actual and ideal attitudes and behavior measured on four scales, each on a different topic: (1) use of authority in getting things done; (2) manipulation versus participation, (3) concern for the welfare of subordinates, and (4) task versus human relation concerns
Heller and Wilpert (1981)	1,500 Managers in 8 countries (France, Great Britain, (West) Germany, Israel, Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and USA)	The "influence-participation continuum" decision-making methods measured on a scale: from "leaders' own decision," via "leaders decide but explain to subordinates," "leaders consult subordinates before decision-making," "joint decision-making with subordinates" to "delegation of decision-making to subordinates"
Al-Jafary and Hollingsworth (1983)	381 Managers in 4 countries in the Arabian Gulf Region (Bahrain, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates) plus USA	Autocratic vs. participative leadership systems using Likert's four systems; (1) exploitative authoritative, (2) benevolent authoritative, (3) consultative, and (4) participative (based on questions on leadership, decision-making, goal-setting, motivation and communication)
Bottger, Hallein, and Yetton (1985)	140 Managers in executive education from 4 geographical areas (Australia, Africa, Papua-New Guinea, Pacific islands)	Decision-making methods on a participation continuum including both individual and group-based alternatives: "leaders' own decision based on own information," "leaders decide with information from subordinates," "leaders solicit ideas and suggestions from individual subordinates before decision-making," "leaders solicit ideas and suggestions from groups of

(continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Authors ^a	Countries included in the study	Interpersonal leadership type of measures
Tannenbaum and Rozgonyi (1986)	6 Countries (Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Mexico, and Romania)	subordinates before decision-making," to "group decision-making, leader acts as chair in the discussion" Participative vs. authoritative-directive leadership practices Replication of Tannenbaum et al. (1974) with other countries
Pavett and Morris (1995)	180 Managers in 5 countries (Italy, Mexico, Spain, UK and USA)	Degree of participation using Likert's four systems: (1) exploitative authoritative, (2) benevolent authoritative, (3) consultative, and (4) participative (based on questions on leadership, decision-making, goal-setting, motivation and communication)

^aPublications listed in chronological order of article publication.

This review of previous studies emphasizes the vital role of interpersonal leadership in enhancing team dynamics and project success. It highlights how understanding its definition, evolution, dimensions, and theories can significantly impact organizational performance and goal achievement.

2.3. The dependent variable (Project Management)

Project management is the disciplined process of planning, executing, and controlling project activities to meet specific goals and deliverables within agreed-upon constraints such as scope, time, and budget. It involves coordinating and applying various processes, tools, and techniques to achieve project objectives effectively. According to the Project Management Institute (PMI), this includes initiating, planning, executing, monitoring and controlling, and closing project processes (Brière et al., 2015).

Project management has evolved significantly over time. Initially, project management practices were informal, but with the industrial revolution, more structured approaches emerged. The 1950s introduced pivotal methodologies like the Critical Path Method (CPM) and Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT), which provided frameworks for project scheduling and resource allocation (Shenhar, 2004). The establishment of the Project Management Institute (PMI) in 1969 marked a significant milestone in formalizing the discipline, leading to the development of the PMBOK (Project Management Body of Knowledge) Guide.

Recent advancements include the integration of agile methodologies, which emphasize iterative development and responsiveness to change, reflecting the need for flexibility in contemporary project management (DeCarlo, 2010; Denney et al., 2020).

Dimensions of Project Management

Project management involves several key dimensions:

1. **Scope Management:** This dimension defines and controls what is included and excluded from the project. Effective scope management ensures that all necessary work is completed without introducing unnecessary changes (Cheah & Ting, 2020).
2. **Time Management:** Focuses on planning and controlling the project schedule to ensure timely completion. Tools such as Gantt charts and network diagrams are employed to manage deadlines effectively (Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008).
3. **Cost Management:** Involves budgeting and cost control to ensure the project is completed within its financial constraints. Accurate cost estimation and effective budget management are critical for project success (Ismail et al., 2014).
4. **Quality Management:** Ensures that the project's deliverables meet the required standards and stakeholder expectations through quality planning, assurance, and control processes (Norrie & Walker, 2004).
5. **Risk Management:** Entails identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks that could impact project objectives. Effective risk management is crucial for minimizing potential adverse effects on the project (Zulch, 2014).
6. **Stakeholder Management:** Involves identifying and engaging stakeholders, managing their expectations, and addressing their concerns throughout the project lifecycle (Smith & Lee, 2023).

Theories of project management

Several theories underpin project management practices:

1. **Critical Path Method (CPM):** Developed to identify the longest sequence of dependent tasks and the minimum project duration. It is essential for

managing project timelines and ensuring timely project completion (Gehring, 2007).

2. **Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT):** Focuses on estimating project duration using probabilistic analysis of task completion times, providing a more flexible approach to scheduling (Shenhar, 2004).
3. **Agile Project Management:** Emphasizes iterative development and adaptability to changing requirements. Agile methodologies like Scrum and Kanban promote flexibility and continuous feedback, making them suitable for dynamic project environments (DeCarlo, 2010).
4. **Stakeholder Theory:** Highlights the importance of managing relationships with all stakeholders to balance competing interests and create value for everyone involved (Freeman, 1984).

Table (2): Studies and practices of Project Management

IJMPB 4,4	Results	Australia	Canada	UK	All respondents	Original survey
	Number of respondents	50 <i>Number of responses</i>	50 <i>Number of responses</i>	50 <i>Number of responses</i>	150 <i>Percentage of total responses</i>	236 <i>Percentage of total responses</i>
556	<i>Project type</i>					
	Construction	5	5	5	10.00	2.12
	Defence	3	1	2	4.00	2.97
	Engineering	4	6	0	6.67	8.05
	Feasibility studies	1	4	1	4.00	2.12
	Information technology	17	13	13	28.67	25.42
	Other	3	9	3	10.00	12.71
	Reorganisation	8	5	19	21.33	18.64
	Research and development	2	1	2	3.33	11.86
	Software development	4	3	4	7.33	11.02
	Staff development/ training	3	3	1	4.67	5.08
	<i>Project carried out for</i>					
	A client	32	24	23	52.67	37.29
	Within own organisation	18	26	27	47.33	62.71
	<i>Industry sector</i>					
	Construction	5	3	0	5.33	0.42
	Defence	3	0	3	4.00	3.81
	Education and training	2	1	6	6.00	2.54
	Finance and insurance	6	5	6	11.33	19.92
	Health care and social assistance	0	6	2	5.33	4.66
	Information media and telecommunications	6	3	10	12.67	3.39
	Manufacturing	5	1	2	5.33	8.47
	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	6	13	0	12.67	4.66
	Other	4	9	11	16.00	24.15
	Public administration	10	3	8	14.00	19.92
	Utilities	3	5	1	6.00	3.39
	Wholesale and retail trade	0	1	1	1.33	4.66
	<i>Number of employees within organisation where project carried out</i>					
	Fewer than ten	4	0	4	5.33	0.42
	10-99	3	4	2	6.00	2.97
	100-499	7	11	8	17.33	14.83
	500-999	12	14	10	24.00	13.98
	1,000 or more	24	21	26	47.33	67.80
	<i>Number of people directly involved in the project including suppliers</i>					
	Fewer than ten	8	7	3	12.00	44.44
	10-99	29	31	34	62.67	47.50
	100-499	6	10	8	16.00	6.39
	500-999	4	1	4	6.00	0.83
	1,000 or more	3	1	1	3.33	0.83
	<i>Respondent's part in project</i>					
	Consultant	6	4	6	10.67	6.36
						(continued)

Table I.
The respondents and their projects

Results	Australia	Canada	UK	All respondents	Original survey	Current practice in project management
Managed project	32	20	30	54.67	62.71	557
Other	2	5	4	7.33	11.86	
Part of project team	10	21	10	27.33	19.07	557
<i>Main decision maker</i>						
Joint (respondent and other(s))	23	23	26	48.00	32.63	557
Other(s)	13	11	9	22.00	24.15	
Respondent	14	16	15	30.00	43.22	557
<i>Project duration (one respondent from Australia did not reply)</i>						
Under six months	9	8	10	18.12	14.41	557
Six to 12 months	18	19	20	38.26	36.86	
13-24 months	12	11	8	20.81	29.66	557
25-36 months	5	9	7	14.09	13.14	
37-48 months	4	2	4	6.71	2.97	557
49-60 months	1	1	0	1.34	1.27	
61 months or more	0	0	1	0.67	1.69	557

Table I.

These studies illustrate the development of project management practices and underscore the importance of various dimensions and theoretical approaches in ensuring project success. They provide a comprehensive understanding of how these elements contribute to effective project management and offer practical insights for enhancing management practices.

2.4. The relationship between the independent and the dependent variables

The relationship between interpersonal leadership and project management within the context of Malaysian non-profit organizations reveals a complex interplay of patterns, conflicts, and gaps that are evident from the literature. This analysis synthesizes findings from several key studies to highlight these dynamics.

Patterns

A recurring pattern in the literature is the significant influence of interpersonal leadership on project management outcomes. Studies consistently highlight how leadership competencies, particularly those related to communication and team dynamics, contribute to project success. For instance, Geoghegan and Dulewicz (2008) find that effective leadership competencies directly impact project success by enhancing team performance and collaboration. Similarly, Cheah and Ting (2020) emphasize the mediating role of team effectiveness in the relationship between leadership and project success, underscoring how interpersonal skills facilitate better team functioning and, consequently, project outcomes. This pattern is further supported by Denney et al. (2020), who document the evolving importance of leadership and interpersonal skills in managing complex projects, indicating that robust interpersonal leadership is crucial for navigating project challenges and achieving success.

Conflicts

Despite these positive correlations, conflicts in the literature suggest that the influence of interpersonal leadership on project management is not universally straightforward. For example, Brière et al. (2015) highlight discrepancies in perceptions of leadership competencies among practitioners in international NGOs, which may affect how interpersonal leadership impacts project management in different contexts. This variability in perceptions can lead to inconsistent outcomes

in project success. Furthermore, Haselberger (2015) notes that while frameworks on interpersonal leadership interactions are beneficial, their application in different project contexts (e.g., ICT projects versus non-profit organizations) may result in varying degrees of effectiveness. These conflicts underscore the need for context-specific understanding and adaptation of leadership practices to address diverse challenges in project management.

Gaps

Several gaps emerge from the literature, pointing to areas where further research is needed. A notable gap is the limited focus on non-profit organizations in Malaysia, as identified by Mohd Shariff and Marican (2020). While there is substantial research on leadership in for-profit and international NGO settings, less attention has been paid to the specific challenges faced by Malaysian non-profits. This creates a gap in understanding how interpersonal leadership uniquely affects project management in this regional and sectoral context. Additionally, DeCarlo (2010) and Shenhar (2004) discuss strategic project leadership and extreme project management, but these insights are often generalized and may not fully account for the nuances of leadership within the non-profit sector. Addressing these gaps requires tailored research that considers the unique socio-economic and cultural contexts of Malaysian non-profits, ensuring that leadership strategies are effectively aligned with local organizational needs and project goals.

In summary, the analysis of relationships between interpersonal leadership and project management reveals clear patterns of influence, conflicts in leadership perceptions and application, and gaps in context-specific research. By addressing these aspects, future studies can provide a more nuanced understanding of how interpersonal leadership affects project management outcomes, particularly in the Malaysian non-profit sector. This approach will contribute to more effective leadership practices and improved project success rates in this unique organizational context.

2.5. Conclusion

To conclude, this research provides a comprehensive examination of the role of interpersonal leadership in enhancing project management effectiveness within Malaysian non-profit organizations (NPOs). The findings underscore that leaders who excel in building strong interpersonal relationships, inspiring their teams, and effectively managing collaborative dynamics are instrumental in driving project success. The research reviewed, including studies by Smith & Lee (2023) and Johnson & Smith (2019), consistently highlights the positive impact of transformational leadership and adept interpersonal skills on aligning organizational objectives with mission-driven initiatives. These qualities are pivotal in improving the effectiveness of project management within the context of Malaysian NPOs.

Despite these significant insights, the study reveals several theoretical and practical gaps that warrant further exploration. On the theoretical front, there is a noticeable lack of in-depth analysis regarding how interpersonal leadership aligns with Malaysian cultural norms and organizational structures. Cheah & Ting (2020) have pointed out the importance of leadership in project success, yet there remains a limited understanding of how specific leadership behaviors influence team dynamics and project outcomes within the unique Malaysian context. This gap suggests a need for more culturally nuanced research to understand how local customs, values, and organizational practices shape leadership effectiveness.

From a practical perspective, many Malaysian NPOs currently operate without structured frameworks for developing and nurturing interpersonal leadership skills. This deficiency impedes their ability to manage collaborative projects effectively, leading to suboptimal project outcomes. There is a critical need for these organizations to implement structured leadership development programs that focus on enhancing interpersonal skills, as well as adopting regular feedback mechanisms to continually improve leadership practices.

Future research should aim to address these gaps by investigating how leadership practices can be tailored to fit the Malaysian cultural and organizational landscape. Longitudinal studies could offer valuable insights into how leadership styles evolve

over time and their subsequent impact on project outcomes. Such studies would be instrumental in understanding the dynamic nature of leadership and its long-term effects on organizational success. Additionally, research into the effectiveness of targeted leadership training programs could provide empirical evidence supporting the design and implementation of such initiatives, specifically addressing the unique challenges faced by Malaysian NPOs.

Comparative studies that include NPOs from diverse cultural and regional contexts could further enrich the understanding of effective leadership practices and their impact on project management. By employing advanced methodologies such as longitudinal case studies and multinational surveys, researchers could offer a more comprehensive analysis of how interpersonal leadership influences project management effectiveness across different settings.

In summary, this research makes a significant contribution to the field of non-profit management and leadership by emphasizing the critical role of interpersonal leadership in enhancing project management outcomes. It offers valuable theoretical insights by integrating cultural and organizational factors specific to Malaysia, thereby refining existing leadership theories. Practically, the study provides actionable recommendations for developing leadership training programs, engaging in team-building activities, and establishing regular feedback mechanisms. These strategies are designed to address practical gaps and foster a more effective and resilient organizational environment within Malaysian NPOs.

By highlighting the importance of interpersonal leadership and identifying both theoretical and practical gaps, this research lays a solid foundation for future advancements in understanding and enhancing leadership within the non-profit sector. It sets the stage for further exploration into how leadership practices can be optimized to achieve sustainable impact and drive success in Malaysian NPOs and beyond.

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