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The Influence of Leadership Styles on Gen Z's Work Performance in the Healthcare Industry within Klang Valley, Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Effective leadership is essential in the healthcare sector to ensure quality care, strengthen teamwork, and enhance employee engagement, particularly among Generation Z employees. Leadership styles play a crucial role in shaping employee attitudes and performance, while effective human resource management and positive workplace relationships further contribute to productivity. However, challenges such as limited funding, investor pressures, and evolving market trends often drive leaders toward short-term, directive approaches. This study examines the impact of leadership styles on Gen Z work performance in the healthcare sector of Klang Valley, Malaysia. A quantitative approach with a descriptive research design was employed, guided by a deductive method consistent with positivist research philosophy. Data were collected from Gen Z employees working in private healthcare institutions in Klang Valley, a region known for its high concentration of healthcare facilities within Malaysia's dual-tier system. The study applied judgment sampling to select participants based on relevant criteria. The findings indicate that all proposed hypotheses are supported. Transformational leadership ($p < 0.001$), transactional leadership ($p < 0.001$), and situational leadership ($p < 0.001$) each have a significant positive effect on Gen Z employees' work performance. These results provide important insights for healthcare organizations to optimize leadership practices and improve workforce outcomes. Aligning leadership strategies with the characteristics and expectations of Gen Z employees can enhance both productivity and engagement, while also

contributing to the broader understanding of leadership effectiveness in contemporary healthcare settings.

Keywords
Gen Z's Work Performance
Healthcare Industry
Situational Leadership
Transactional Leadership
Transformational Leadership

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Introduction

In healthcare organizations, the critical roles of employees such as administrators, doctors, and nurses are vital for the functioning of the social system, yet a significant concern has arisen due to a shortage of healthcare workers [1]. Healthcare systems face ongoing challenges to improve public health outcomes while controlling costs. Leadership styles and management strategies within healthcare organizations significantly impact staff performance and key performance metrics [2]. Many organizations today include employees from four key generations: Baby Boomers, Generation X, Millennials (Generation Y), and Generation Z. As of 2020, Generation Z was expected to total 2.56 billion globally, comprising around 20% of the workforce [3].

Gen Z prefers transformational leadership characterized by effective communication, support for personal development, emotional intelligence, personal connection, and fairness. Their motivation, job satisfaction, and career aspirations can be influenced by the leadership behaviors of their managers [4]. Workplaces are currently optimized for past generations, but Generation Z stands out with their ability to handle uncertainty and adapt to technical challenges. Lakshmypriya and Ramakrishna [5] highlight the importance of transformational leadership in successfully managing this unique cohort. Transactional leadership enhances the motivation of Gen Z employees by rewarding them for achieving specific objectives. Clear communication of rewards and recognition of achievements lead to improved performance among Gen Z workers [6]. This guidance and support make Gen Z employees feel valued, encouraging optimal performance. They experience greater job satisfaction with transactional leadership styles that provide rewards for meeting targets. Situational leadership, which fosters inspiration, teamwork, and empathy, is deemed most effective, as it allows leaders to adapt their approaches based on circumstances and behaviors to help Gen Z achieve their goals [7]-[9].

Leadership significantly impacts employee attitudes and performance, especially among younger workers in healthcare. Effective leadership is crucial for quality care, teamwork, and engagement as Gen Z enters the field, necessitating an exploration of how

different leadership styles affect their work performance. Existing research has explored the relationship between leadership and employee work behavior in diverse sectors, including retail [10], [11], aviation [12],[13], garment [14], manufacturing [15], apparel [16], and e-commerce [17]. Focused research on the impact of leadership styles on Gen Z employees in the healthcare industry is lacking. Healthcare is essential in every economy, and governments implement various initiatives to improve healthcare services and health worker performance.

Research shows that effective leadership and suitable leadership styles are crucial for achieving optimal job performance among health workers [18]. Transformational leadership is inconsistently applied due to challenges like limited funding, investor expectations, and changing market trends, which cause leaders to focus on short-term, directive styles. This shift contributes to frustration, emotional exhaustion, and reduced motivation among Gen Z workers [19]. Gen Z's upbringing with technology equips them with advanced digital skills essential for daily life. However, issues arise when leaders fail to utilize technology effectively for improved communication and collaboration. Excessive or improper use of technology may negatively affect team productivity and engagement [20], leading to boredom and a desire for varied job roles and more workplace flexibility.

Research on the impact of leadership styles on employee performance in Malaysian healthcare settings is still limited [21],[22]. To fill the gaps in this study, research often overlooks the younger healthcare workforce, particularly Gen Z, who have unique expectations and work preferences. This study seeks to examine the different leadership styles affect Gen Z's motivation, teamwork, and productivity in healthcare environments, specifically in the Klang Valley. The goal is to identify the relationship between leadership styles and Gen Z's work performance in this setting.

Literature Review

In academic research, variables are crucial for understanding relationships among different factors. They are defined as attributes or conditions that are examined, managed, or observed by researchers. Additionally, variables reflect characteristics shared by individuals in a population, with values that may vary based on context or measurement methods. In the Malaysian healthcare industry, especially in Klang Valley, studies show a practical knowledge gap concerning leadership styles among Gen Z employees, with transformational, transactional, and situational leadership styles being well documented in existing literature [23].

A. Transformational leadership and Gen Z's work performance.

Transformational leadership is associated with enhanced employee outcomes such as motivation, innovation, and performance. Specifically, it has a positive impact on work performance, which relates to the effective execution of core job responsibilities [24]. Transformational leadership fosters greater trust in leaders among employees, which boosts

job satisfaction and encourages proactive work behaviors, resulting in enhanced performance. Job position significantly affects the link between leadership style and job performance, with mid-level Gen Z employees showing a preference for transformational leadership traits. The study from Fadila and Wolor [20] indicate a positive relationship between transformational leadership and the performance of Gen Z employees, who view transformational leaders as effective.

H1: There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and Gen Z's work performance.

B. Transactional leadership and Gen Z's work performance.

Transactional leadership positively influences employee performance, while Husain [25] indicates that this style involves establishing clear, measurable goals for individuals and teams within organizations. This leadership style fosters clarity and supports Gen Z employees in their development by providing clear directions to achieve organizational goals and complete important tasks [26].

H2: There is a positive relationship between transactional leadership and Gen Z's work performance.

C. Situational leadership and Gen Z's work performance.

Gen Z's work performance improves with situational leadership, which also enhances team loyalty, collaboration, and sustainable human resource development [27]. Implementing situational leadership is an effective strategy to maximize workforce potential and enhance Gen Z's work performance, as it plays a key role in the success of a company's business [28], with leaders serving as role models for Gen Z employees.

H3: There is a positive relationship between situational leadership and Gen Z's work performance.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework emphasizes the significance of leadership styles in addressing organizational challenges related to employee engagement and retention, underscoring leadership as a vital factor in influencing these aspects, as supported by multiple studies. See Fig. 1.

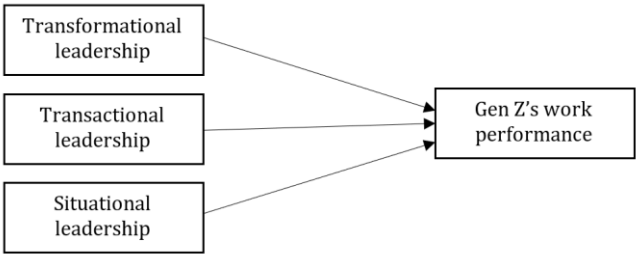


Fig 1. Conceptualized on leadership styles and Gen Z's work performance

Fig. 1 presents the conceptual framework used in this study, integrating elements from transformational, transactional, and situational leadership theories, which significantly affect Gen Z's work performance. Gen Z employees, with their unique characteristics and beliefs, may need tailored leadership approaches to work effectively.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a well-established motivational framework in psychology and organizational behavior. Transformational leaders can boost employees' autonomy by creating supportive work environments and enhance their perceived competence by valuing their ideas and perspectives. Transformational leadership enhances researcher performance by addressing autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs. By fostering initiative and clarifying goals through a shared vision, such leaders boost productivity, innovation, and collaboration among researchers. The SDT dimensions of autonomy, capability, and meaningfulness influence performance understanding [29]. Employees feel more autonomy under transformational leadership, highlighting that motivational autonomy regulation is internally shaped by the individual.

Situational Leadership Theory explain that the leader–subordinate relationship progresses through four stages, which are tailored to the subordinate's level of maturity or readiness. Managers should assess employee performance and support improvement when necessary. They need flexibility to adjust their leadership style based on employee readiness, opting for a delegative approach when employees demonstrate responsibility. Strong communication skills are essential to clearly convey expectations to employees. Situational leadership promotes adaptability by acknowledging that situations can change quickly, requiring leaders to employ various strategies suitable for the specific circumstances [30].

Situational leadership is a style where leaders adapt their approach according to the experience and characteristics of their group [28]. The situational leadership model is applicable across all organizational levels, from CEOs collaborating with the board of directors to middle managers leading team meetings and department heads planning structural changes. This leadership theory enhances Gen Z's performance by aligning the appropriate support level with their developmental needs. Situational leadership fosters ongoing communication, allowing Gen Z employees to clarify expectations and obtain timely feedback, thus enhancing work quality and efficiency. This approach supports Gen Z in performing confidently and effectively amidst diverse work demands.

Gaps in Study

A crucial gap in applied, context-specific studies concerning leadership approaches in Malaysia's healthcare sector. Failure to meet Gen Z expectations in leadership can adversely impact employee engagement, work performance, and retention. Limited empirical research on Gen Z healthcare employees in urban Malaysia has predominantly overlooked generational

and contextual performance differences, focusing instead on general leadership outcomes. This indicates a pressing need for practical, localized studies in this domain. Recent studies have explored leadership styles and employee performance as they relate to Gen Z in different organizational settings; however, there are still significant gaps pertaining to Gen Z healthcare employees specifically within Klang Valley, Malaysia, as outlined in the accompanying table highlighting key evidence gaps from current literature.

Table 1. Key evidence gaps derived from contemporary literature

Author	Past Research Gaps	Method	Finding	Contribution
Aboramadan et al. [31]	Focused on service industries broadly without generational segmentation	Quantitative (SEM)	Ethical leadership positively influenced employee performance	Gen Z employees in healthcare were not specifically examined
Rasheed et al. [32]	Examined leadership and performance but ignored healthcare context	Survey-based	Leadership styles significantly affected employee performance	The healthcare industry and regional focus on the Klang Valley were absent
Dirani et al. [33]	Discussed leadership effectiveness post-COVID-19	Conceptual review	Adaptive leadership is crucial during crises	Lacks empirical evidence on Gen Z healthcare workers' performance
Al-Swidi et al. [34]	Investigated leadership and job outcomes in developing countries	Quantitative	Transformational leadership improved job outcomes	Did not focus on Gen Z or healthcare employees
Ahmed [35]	Focused on leadership styles and job satisfaction	Cross-sectional survey	Leadership styles significantly influenced satisfaction	Work performance as an outcome variable was not examined
Vullighhs et al. [36]	Examined leadership and employee outcomes in the general workforce	Longitudinal	Leadership behaviours predicted employee outcomes	Generational differences, particularly Gen Z were not addressed
Goh and Okumus [37]	Studied Gen Z work attitudes in service industries	Mixed methods	Gen Z values supportive and inclusive leadership	Lacked direct measurement of work performance
Alheet et al. [38]	Examined leadership styles in healthcare organizations	Quantitative	Transformational leadership improved employee outcomes	Gen Z employees were not analyzed as a separate cohort
Nguyen et al. [39]	Investigated leadership and performance in Asian organizations	SEM	Leadership styles had a positive impact on performance	Cultural specificity to Malaysia and the Klang Valley was Missing
Zulvia et al. [40]	Studied leadership and employee performance in Malaysia	Survey	Leadership styles influenced performance significantly	Did not focus on the healthcare sector or the Gen Z workforce

Material and Methods

This study uses a quantitative, descriptive research design to investigate how leadership styles affect Gen Z's work performance in the healthcare sector of Klang Valley, highlighting the suitability of this approach for systematically exploring the link between

leadership practices and employee performance. A cross-sectional time horizon is employed to analyze the relationship between independent variables (leadership styles) and the dependent variable (work performance) using data collected at a single point in time. Positivism posits that reality is external and observable through empirical data, which is effective for analyzing the relationship between leadership styles and Gen Z's work performance in the healthcare sector of Klang Valley using quantitative methods.

This study utilizes a deductive research approach to develop hypotheses from established leadership theories and previous empirical studies, aligning with the positivist research philosophy that posits social phenomena like employee performance can be objectively measured and analyzed. Klang Valley is highlighted for its significant number of private healthcare facilities and workforce in Malaysia's dual-tier healthcare system. According to the Ministry of Health Malaysia in year 2023, there are 212 licensed private hospitals with 18,779 beds, indicating significant infrastructure. Employment in the private healthcare sector rose from 132,082 in 2015 to about 167,690 in 2022, marking a 27% increase across private hospitals, clinics, and ancillary services.

The study analyzes individual Gen Z employees in healthcare organizations in the Klang Valley to understand the impact of leadership styles on work performance. Cochran's formula for calculating sample size in non-probability sampling for large populations is $n = p\ (1\text{-}p)\ z^2 / E^2$. In this study, the sample size formula incorporates n (sample size), p (estimated population proportion), z (confidence level), and E (maximum error). A 95% confidence level with a z-value of 1.96 is used, as referenced by Taherdoost [41]. A 5% margin of error is deemed acceptable [42], and a 50% occurrence rate is recommended for maximizing variance and sample size for this study is 384. The study's questionnaire was created to be clear, well-organized, and logically structured, providing appropriate instructions to effectively guide respondents. It consists of three main sections: Section A, Section B, and Section C. Section A collect demographic information like education level, years of service, and job position, ensuring data is gathered from the appropriate population. Sections B and C utilize a five-point Likert scale (1 to 5) to assess participants' perceptions of leadership styles and their impact on work performance. Section B addresses independent variables—transformational, transactional, and situational leadership—while Section C examines the dependent variable, work performance.

This methodology enables quantification of subjective responses for statistical analysis, facilitating comparisons among participants and constructs. In this study, a five-point Likert scale was used to gather data on employees' opinions about different leadership styles and their effects on work performance. The questionnaire was meticulously designed to align with the research goals. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, a sophisticated statistical tool

effective for assessing complex relationships among latent constructs in quantitative research. The Questionnaire consists of five response options, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5) in Table 2. It measures three independent variables: transformational, transactional, and situational leadership, against the dependent variable of work performance.

Table 2. Measurement Items

Variables	Source	Measurment Item	Likert Scale
Transformational Leadership	[43]-[45]	• I agree that my leader effectively communicates a clear and inspiring vision for our work. • I agree that my leader motivates me to exceed my usual expectations. • I believe my leader promotes creative thinking in solving work-related problems. • I believe my leader cares about my personal needs and development. • I agree that my leader sets a good example through ethical and professional behavior.	5 Likert Scale
Transactional Leadership	[46],[47]	• My leader clearly outlines the rewards for meeting work performance expectations. • My leader rewards me for achieving work targets. • My leader closely monitors my work to ensure standards are met. • My leader takes corrective action when my performance does not meet expectations. • My leader emphasizes compliance with rules and procedures in daily work activities.	5 Likert Scale
Situational Leadership	[48],[49]	• My leader tailors their leadership style to fit the specific work situation. • I concur that my leader offers increased guidance for complex tasks and greater independence for routine tasks. • My leader adjusts their behavior according to the team's needs. • My leader adjusts between task-oriented guidance and supportive behavior based on the needs of employees. • My leader modifies their decision-making and support approach based on the urgency or type of work tasks.	5 Likert Scale
Work Performance	[50]-[52]	• I consistently complete my job tasks efficiently and on time. • The quality of the work aligns with the organization's standards. • I actively contribute to achieving team or department goals. • I adapt my work behaviours to meet changing job demands. • I proactively strive to enhance my work performance.	5 Likert Scale

Results and Discussions

The study's findings are derived from data gathered from Gen Z employees in the healthcare sector of Klang Valley, using a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire analyzed with SPSS software. A total of 500 questionnaires were distributed online to Gen Z employees in the healthcare sector of Klang Valley, resulting in 420 responses, with 411 being complete for analysis. Eight (8) were excluded for missing information. The survey achieved an approximately 84% response rate, exceeding the typical 60% benchmark, which indicates the reliability of the data for statistical analysis.

A. Profile Respondents

The demographic profile of 411 respondents is analyzed considering age, education level, and employment status, with findings presented through descriptive statistics in Table 3. The majority of respondents are aged 22–25 years (46%, n=189), followed by those aged 26-28 (43.3%, n=178), and 18-21 (10.7%, n=44). The respondents' education levels are as follows: 80% hold a bachelor's degree (n=329), 9.7% have a diploma/vocational certificate (n=40), 5.1% possess a master's degree (n=21), 3.2% have a doctorate (PhD)/professional qualification (n=13), and 1.9% are at the secondary level (n=8). Respondents' employment status reveals that 58.6% are full-time employees, 15.3% are part-time employees, 13.6% are interns/trainees, and 12.4% are contract/temporary employees.

Table 3. Respondents Profile

Demographic	Categories	Frequency (n=411)	Percentage (%)
Age	18 – 21	44	10.7%
	22 - 25	189	46.0%
	26 - 28	178	43.3%
Education Level	Secondary	8	1.9%
	Diploma / Vocational Certificate	40	9.7%
	Bachelor's Degree	329	80.0%
	Master's Degree	21	5.1%
	Doctorate (PhD) / Professional Qualification	13	3.2%
Employment Status	Full-time Employee	241	58.6%
	Part-time Employee	63	15.3%
	Contract / Temporary Employee	51	12.4%
	Intern / Trainee	56	13.6%

B. Reliability Test

The term "reliability analysis" involves assessing the consistency and stability of variables to ensure measurement quality. It is used to evaluate the validity of questionnaire items, with Cronbach's Alpha being a key measure of reliability. A value between 0.7 and 0.9 indicates strong reliability, enhancing the credibility of findings through positive variable correlation. For pilot tests, a score between 0.6 and 0.7 remains acceptable. Based on Table 4, the Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.727 to 0.761 indicate high reliability, confirming that the 15 items

under the independent variables and the dependent variable are consistent and suitable for further analysis.

Table 4. Reliability Test

Contructs	No. of Items	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Transformational Leadership	5	• I agree that my leader effectively communicates a clear and inspiring vision for our work.	0.904
		• I agree that my leader motivates me to exceed my usual expectations.	0.904
		• I believe my leader promotes creative thinking in solving work-related problems.	0.904
		• I believe my leader cares about my personal needs and development.	0.900
		• I agree that my leader sets a good example through ethical and professional behavior.	0.905
Transactional Leadership	5	• My leader clearly outlines the rewards for meeting work performance expectations.	0.904
		• My leader rewards me for achieving work targets.	0.902
		• My leader closely monitors my work to ensure standards are met.	0.906
		• My leader takes corrective action when my performance does not meet expectations.	0.903
		• My leader emphasizes compliance with rules and procedures in daily work activities.	0.899
Situational Leadership	5	• My leader tailors their leadership style to fit the specific work situation.	0.902
		• I concur that my leader offers increased guidance for complex tasks and greater independence for routine tasks.	0.905
		• My leader adjusts their behavior according to the team's needs.	0.903
		• My leader adjusts between task-oriented guidance and supportive behavior based on the needs of employees.	0.903
		• My leader modifies their decision-making and support approach based on the urgency or type of work tasks.	0.903
Work Performance	5	• I consistently complete my job tasks efficiently and on time.	0.676
		• The quality of the work aligns with the organization's standards.	0.707
		• I actively contribute to achieving team or department goals.	0.717
		• I adapt my work behaviours to meet changing job demands.	0.685
		• I proactively strive to enhance my work performance.	0.628

C. Correlation Analysis

In Table 5, a correlation matrix illustrates the strength and direction of linear relationships between variables. A correlation value exceeding 0.80 may suggest multicollinearity issues, which can compromise result validity and distort study conclusions. The correlation matrix shows that all independent variables are significantly related, with coefficients between 0.810

and 0.838. The strongest association with the dependent variable is 0.810, linked to situational leadership, indicating a strong relationship between these variables. High correlations exist among independent variables, notably between transactional leadership and situational leadership (0.838) and transformational leadership and situational leadership (0.837), suggesting potential multicollinearity in the model.

Table 5. Correlation Analysis

		WP	TFL	TAL	SL
WP	Pearson Correlation	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)				
TFL	Pearson Correlation	.805**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001			
TAL	Pearson Correlation	.809**	.814**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	< .001	< .001		
SL	Pearson Correlation	.810**	.837**	.838**	1
	Sig.(2-tailed)	< .001	< .001	< .001	

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

D. Multicollinearity Analysis

Transactional leadership is the strongest predictor of work performance with a highest standardized beta coefficient of 0.325, while situational leadership has the lowest at 0.284, indicating its lesser impact. All examined leadership styles show positive beta coefficients, suggesting that increases in any of them lead to improvements in work performance. To assess multicollinearity, tolerance values should exceed 0.1 and VIF values should remain below 10, indicating significant independent variables [53]. In this study, all independent variables meet these criteria with VIFs below 10 and tolerances above 0.1. Nevertheless, VIF values exceeding 2.5 may indicate moderate multicollinearity [54]. Transformational, transactional, and situational leadership significantly predict work performance, with each p-value below 0.001. Transactional leadership is the strongest predictor (β = 0.325), followed by transformational (β = 0.303) and situational leadership (β = 0.284), indicating that increases in these leadership styles correlate with improved work performance. Based on the coefficients presented in Table 4.14, the regression equation can be written as follows:

$$y = 0.632 + 0.281\,X1 + 0.300\,X2 + 0.271\,X3 \quad (1)$$

where
y = Gen Z's Work Performance in the Healthcare Industry within Klang Valley
X1 = Transformational Leadership
X2 = Transactional Leadership
X3 = Situational Leadership

Table 6 presents regression coefficients showing that transformational, transactional, and situational leadership significantly predict work performance (p < .001). Transactional leadership has the strongest standardized effect (β = .325), followed by transformational (β

= .303) and situational leadership (β = .284). Collinearity statistics indicate acceptable levels, with VIF values below 5.

Table 6. Coefficients [a]

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	Collinearity Statistics			
	B	*Std. Error*	*Beta*	*t*	*Sig*	*Tolerance*	*VIF*
1 (Constant)	.632	.108		5.835	< .001		
TFL	.281	.046	.303	6.048	< .001	.258	3.882
TAL	.300	.046	.325	6.455	< .001	.255	3.917
SL	.271	.051	.284	5.322	< .001	.227	4.411

a. Dependent Variable: Work Performance

E. Multiple Regression (Hypothesis Analysis)

The multiple regression analysis showed a strong correlation (R = 0.858) between independent and dependent variables, with R^2 = 0.737, indicating that leadership styles (transformational, transactional, situational) explain 73.7% of the variance in work performance (Table 7). The adjusted R^2 value is 0.735, which is 0.002 lower than R^2, confirming the model's stability and reliable explanatory power despite the number of predictors. The standard error of the estimate is 0.29106, indicating the average distance between observed and predicted work performance values. The Durbin–Watson statistic is 1.761, within the acceptable range of 1.5 to 2.5, indicating independent residuals and satisfying regression assumptions. The results suggest that the regression model effectively analyzes the influence of leadership styles on work performance.

Table 7. Multiple Regression

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	.858[a]	.737	.735	.29106	1.761

a. Predictors: (Constant), TFL, TAL, SL
b. Dependent Variable: Work Performance

F. Regression ANOVA

The regression ANOVA results indicate a p-value less than 0.05, showing the overall model's statistical significance. This confirms that transformational, transactional, and situational leadership significantly impact work performance, explaining a meaningful variation in the dependent variable. Regression ANOVA is a statistical method that assesses whether variances from two or more independent variables significantly impact a dependent variable. A p-value below 0.05 suggests a significant relationship, while values above 0.05 indicate insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. These findings demonstrate that the model is robust and suitable for explaining the relationship between leadership styles and work performance.

Table 8. Regression ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	96.587	3	32.196	380.037	< .001[b]
	Residual	34.480	407	.085		
	Total	131.066	410			

a. Dependent Variable: Work Performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), TFL, TAL, SL

Table 9 summarizes the hypothesis testing results, indicating that all proposed relationships are statistically significant ($p < 0.001$). Transformational, transactional, and situational leadership each show a positive effect on Gen Z employees' work performance in the healthcare industry within Klang Valley. Therefore, all three hypotheses (H1, H2, and H3) are accepted.

Table 9. Summary of findings

Hypothesis	Path Relationship	Significant (P < 0.05)	Decision
H1	There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and work performance among Gen Z employees in the healthcare industry within the Klang Valley.	<0.001	Accepted
H2	There is a positive relationship between transactional leadership and work performance among Gen Z employees in the healthcare industry within the Klang Valley.	<0.001	Accepted
H3	There is a positive relationship between situational leadership and work performance among Gen Z employees in the healthcare industry within the Klang Valley.	<0.001	Accepted

H1: There is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and work performance among Gen Z employees in the healthcare industry within the Klang Valley.

The findings indicate that transformational leadership significantly enhances Gen Z work performance, with a regression analysis revealing a standardized beta coefficient of 0.303 ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that work performance increases by 0.303 units for each one-unit increase in transformational leadership. This result supports prior research that shows transformational leadership enhances motivation, engagement, and job performance in younger employees, particularly Gen Z. This generation favors inspiring leaders who offer a clear vision and meaningful work experiences, leading to better performance when supported and encouraged. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 is accepted.

H2: There is a positive relationship between transactional leadership and work performance among Gen Z employees in the healthcare industry within the Klang Valley.

Transactional leadership positively influences Gen Z work performance, with a regression analysis indicating a standardized beta coefficient of 0.325 ($p < 0.001$). This

suggests that for each unit increase in transactional leadership, work performance rises by 0.325 units, supporting previous findings that highlight the effectiveness of structured leadership and reward-based incentives in boosting productivity. Gen Z employees favor transactional leadership for its clarity in guidance, rewards, and feedback that enhance performance, leading to the acceptance of Hypothesis 2.

H3: There is a positive relationship between situational leadership and work performance among Gen Z employees in the healthcare industry within the Klang Valley.

Situational leadership has a significant positive impact on Gen Z work performance, with a standardized beta coefficient of 0.284 ($p < 0.001$), indicating a 0.284 unit increase in performance for each unit increase in situational leadership. This finding supports earlier research on adaptive leadership, highlighting that leaders should tailor their methods to meet the needs and readiness of employees. This flexibility benefits Gen Z employees by providing appropriate guidance and support, leading to improved development and work performance. Consequently, Hypothesis 3 is accepted.

Practical and Policy Contribution and Implications

This study highlights key implications for healthcare managers regarding Gen Z employees, who prioritize meaningful work, clear guidance, and career development opportunities. It suggests that employing transformational, supportive, or participative leadership styles can enhance Gen Z performance. Additionally, maintaining transparent and frequent communication is essential for building trust and ensuring that these employees feel valued. Implementing these strategies can lead to improved team performance, reduced turnover, and greater workplace satisfaction. Healthcare organizations can utilize this study's findings to attract, retain, and engage Gen Z talent by adjusting workforce planning to include leadership development that meets generational needs. Implementing performance improvement initiatives that promote team collaboration, mentorship, and employee engagement can enhance service quality and patient care. Understanding the impact of leadership styles on Gen Z employees will help strengthen human resource strategies and foster a more motivated and productive workforce.

This study suggests that policymakers and human resource departments should implement inclusive workplace policies that cater to younger employees' expectations. These can include career development opportunities, mentorships, flexible work arrangements, and leadership training focused on adaptability and communication. Furthermore, policies that promote employee well-being, recognition, and a feedback culture can enhance job satisfaction and performance, ensuring alignment with Gen Z needs and fostering long-term productivity and engagement. Effective management strategies can enhance employee engagement and productivity by aligning with Gen Z's desire for guidance and professional growth. Supportive

leadership that fosters employee development is linked to higher motivation and performance. Additionally, creating a work environment that promotes autonomy and collaboration boosts employee commitment and effectiveness. Implementing these practices can lead to improved performance, reduced turnover, and stronger organizational outcomes for healthcare organizations in the Klang Valley.

Limitation and Recommendation

While the study offers valuable insights into the impact of leadership styles on Gen Z's work performance in healthcare, it acknowledges several limitations. Research findings are limited to the healthcare industry in the Klang Valley and may not apply to other sectors like information technology, education, or engineering due to differing work dynamics and leadership expectations. Secondly, the study's scope was restricted to Klang Valley, indicating that workplace culture and employee behaviour may differ in other regions of Malaysia. Thirdly, the study's sample mainly included Gen Z employees, potentially skewing the insights regarding the views and work effectiveness of older generations. Fourthly, the study's cross-sectional design only provided a snapshot of the relationships between leadership styles and work performance, limiting the observation of changes or trends over time. Data collection involved self-reported questionnaires, which may introduce bias as participants might exaggerate or downplay their perceptions and performance. These limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting results and designing future research.

Future research should investigate additional factors affecting work performance in healthcare, including inclusive leadership, coaching leadership, leader support, and psychological safety. Studies indicate that inclusive leadership enhances employee outcomes [55], while psychological safety and leader support significantly influence work performance [56]. Second, future research should expand beyond the healthcare industry in the Klang Valley to sectors like IT, education, or engineering. This expansion is important as leadership effects may vary across different environments, and understanding these relationships in diverse contexts could enhance the generalizability of findings, particularly regarding Gen Z employees. Thirdly, this research employed a cross-sectional design, emphasizing the need for longitudinal studies to assess how leadership styles affect work performance over time, particularly among Gen Z employees. Such designs can yield deeper insights into their changing responses. Supporting literature highlights the importance of monitoring employee performance over time to grasp the dynamic impact of leadership behaviors.

Conclusion

In this study, RQ and hypothesis has been achieved because transformational leadership fosters employee motivation and engagement among younger workers, leading to

enhanced performance. Healthcare managers should create supportive environments with regular feedback and professional growth opportunities. Gen Z employees value guidance, clear communication, and skill development, which boost engagement and productivity. Additionally, promoting autonomy and involving employees in decision-making enhances their sense of ownership, improving work outcomes. By adopting these strategies, healthcare organizations in the Klang Valley can empower Gen Z employees, leading to better performance, satisfaction, and retention. The study emphasizes the need for a supportive work environment that fosters autonomy and collaboration. When employees feel trusted and empowered, their performance and commitment to the organization improve. Implementing these insights can help healthcare organizations in the Klang Valley enhance leadership practices, boost employee performance, reduce turnover, and strengthen organizational outcomes.

Author's Contributions

N. I. L. Saari performed the literature review and experimental design and analyzed and interpreted the data, and H. Vasudevan prepared the manuscript text and manuscript edition. N.I.L. Saari and H. Vasudevan performed the experiments and literature review, compiled the data, and prepared the manuscript. N.I.L. Saari performed the data analysis and findings, while H. Vasudevan compiled the data analysis and findings for the manuscript edition.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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