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**Influence of Transformational Leadership on
Organizational Performance via
Coaching as a Management Practice**

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this paper is to find out whether the transformational leadership style can influence the organizational performance via “Coaching” in the Information Communication Technology (ICT) industry in Asia Pacific. The researcher aims to get a better understanding of the influence of transformational leadership and the coaching practice in achieving high organizational performance via mixed methods as a practitioner objectively. This study also explores how the employees and teams can achieve high performance at the organizational level via the close interactions with the transformational leaders as coaches in ICT industry holistically.

Design/Methodology/Approach: The research methodology is mixed methods and questionnaire-oriented with quantitative 5-points Likert scale.

Findings: Based on the literature review have been conducted so far, it is likely there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance via coaching as a management practice. So far, there are no evidence to show the direct linkage between employee coaching (i.e., manager coaching individual subordinates or team) and organizational performance (such as innovation, adaptability, proactivity). The study of coaching as a management practice of an organization is an under-researched area.

Research Limitation: Due to the limited time, budget, resources for an in-depth, the research will apply the cross-sectional design.

Theoretical and Practical Implications: Based on the empirical exploratory study of the ICT, the findings will enrich our theoretical knowledge and understanding of the impact of transformational leadership on the organizational performance through coaching in this fast-paced and highly competitive industry with a cross-cultural perspective across Asia Pacific.

Keywords: Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Coaching as a management practice, Mentoring, Managerial Coaching, Organizational Performance, Self-efficacy, Team Effectiveness

1. Research Question

Leadership is an evolving topic in both East (Hofstede, 1993a; Goldstein, 2019) and West (Aristotle & Rackham, 1934) since Confucius and Aristotle's times. What is leadership? Can we define it objectively? Why does leadership matter (DeLong & Hill, 2012)? Is leadership born or made? What is the most effective leadership style based on numerous leadership theories (Rost, 1991) if it can be tested scientifically? What are the key characteristics and personality traits of a good leader? Are there differences between a leader and a manager? Why some organizations can be transformed from "good to great" (Collins, 2001), yet some organizations struggle so much (Collins, 2009) or even disappear? Why excellence in organizational performance (OP) seem so hard to achieve and sustain?

This pandemic brings many unforeseen challenges for the whole humankind, and it poses many hurdles to many industries especially for the airline, hospitality and tourism industries as highlighted in McKinsey's Covid-19 Implications for business report (2021). Can transformational leaders lead us to cope with the challenges in this VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous) world especially after the unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic happened in Wuhan, China in February 2019? Can the leaders bring inspiration, motivation, happiness, and hope to the followers?

The researcher has 25 years of professional experience in Information and Communications Technology (ICT) industry. Can transformational leaders in ICT industry equip us to cope with the unforeseen challenges and preparing us for the bounce back compared with other leadership models? If yes, why transformational leadership (TL) is more effective than other leadership styles? Are there different understandings on transformational leadership between the Eastern and Western cultures? Countless leaders, followers, executives, managers, scholars, researchers, theologians, writers, and teachers have been intrigued by these questions for a long time. It seems that it is not an easy task to arrive a common consensus for these challenging questions. It is fully reflected by the lifelong commitment of some leadership scholars in researching this complex leadership topic. Bernard M. Bass and Bruce Avolio are two outstanding examples for their dedication in this field (Kidwell, 2005).

Based on 27 years of cross-cultural business experience in various multinational corporations (MNCs) across different industries (i.e., Telecommunications, Technology, Financial Services, Professional Firms, Education and Coaching) across the globe, the researcher has witnessed the rise and fall of many organizations in the globe.

The purpose of this paper is to find out whether the transformational leadership style can impact the organizational performance via “Coaching” in ICT industry. This study aims to get a better understanding of the influence of transformational leadership and coaching in achieving high organizational performance via mixed methods objectively. The research also examines how the employees and teams can achieve higher performance via the close interactions with the transformational leaders as coaches in ICT industry in Asia Pacific holistically.

On leadership, it is interesting that there is no mention of ‘leader’ and ‘mentoring’ in Oracle FY2020 Annual Report (Oracle, 2020). Yet, ‘leaders’ appear nine times and ‘mentoring’ once in Oracle FY2021 Annual Report (Oracle, 2021). It seems that the senior leadership team at the headquarter also recognize the importance in selecting the effective leaders to serve as role models for an inclusive workforce. These are the leaders who listen, and who embrace diversity and inclusion culture (Oracle, 2021).

The research topic is **“Influence of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Performance via Coaching as a Management Practice”** in ICT industry. There are three main research questions.

- To what extent transformational leadership lead to higher organizational performance?
- How can the effect of coaching practice lead to higher organizational performance in a multi-cultural workforce?
- What is the moderation effect of coaching on transformational leadership that lead to higher organizational performance?

2. Objectives of the Study

This study will aim to explore the transformational leadership style in ICT industry and evaluate whether they are effective in driving higher organizational performance. The focus is to investigate the mainstream leadership traits, skills, and behaviours in this fast-paced and highly competitive ICT industry, and to enrich our understanding of transformational leadership and its impact on individual, team, business units, and organizational performance via the coaching as a management practice. We enquire into how a transformational leader can be an effective coach. The researcher aims to scrutinize if there are effective coaching practices globally in order to meet the challenges of a complex world as suggested by Lawrence & Moore (2019).

Furthermore, this research will examine whether the transformational leadership can enhance the organizational performance by improving the talents with innovation, creativity, adaptability, proactivity, growth mindset, and better soft skills. In addition, this study will ascertain if the transformational leader as a coach can work effectively with a very highly complex and diverse multi-cultural workforce in Asia Pacific (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

This study will be conducted via an empirical exploratory mixed methods approach with the following key stakeholders: Senior leadership, middle management, and frontline employees. For organizational performance, the researcher plans to measure the organizational performance based on four angles with a Balanced Scorecard approach (Kaplan & Norton, 1996):

- **Employee:** employee engagement, learning and development
- **Internal Business Process:** internal business alignment and execution
- **Customer:** customer satisfaction
- **Financial:** company financial results

This research also aims to generate evidence-based findings and presents the plausible theoretical and practical contributions that can advance our understanding of coaching as a management practice in both academia and practitioner domains.

3. Literature Review

Leadership

There are many leadership theories based on 8 months in-depth literature review via first-hand research in EBSCO, ProQuest, Google Scholar, HKU Scholars Hub, China Doctoral Dissertations Full-text Database, and eight visits of the Hong Kong Public Library Research Centre. The researcher is focusing on the latest top academic peer reviewed journals, top-grade academic papers, and published dissertation papers at PhD and DBA level during the past five years.

Obviously, the literature does not have a consensus on the most effective leadership model in a highly diverse culture in MNCs across Asia Pacific. Table 1 highlights some of the most popular Leadership Theory in academia. It explains why the study of leadership is such a challenging topic for the researchers as there are many leadership theories. Unquestionably, it is evolving continuously. It

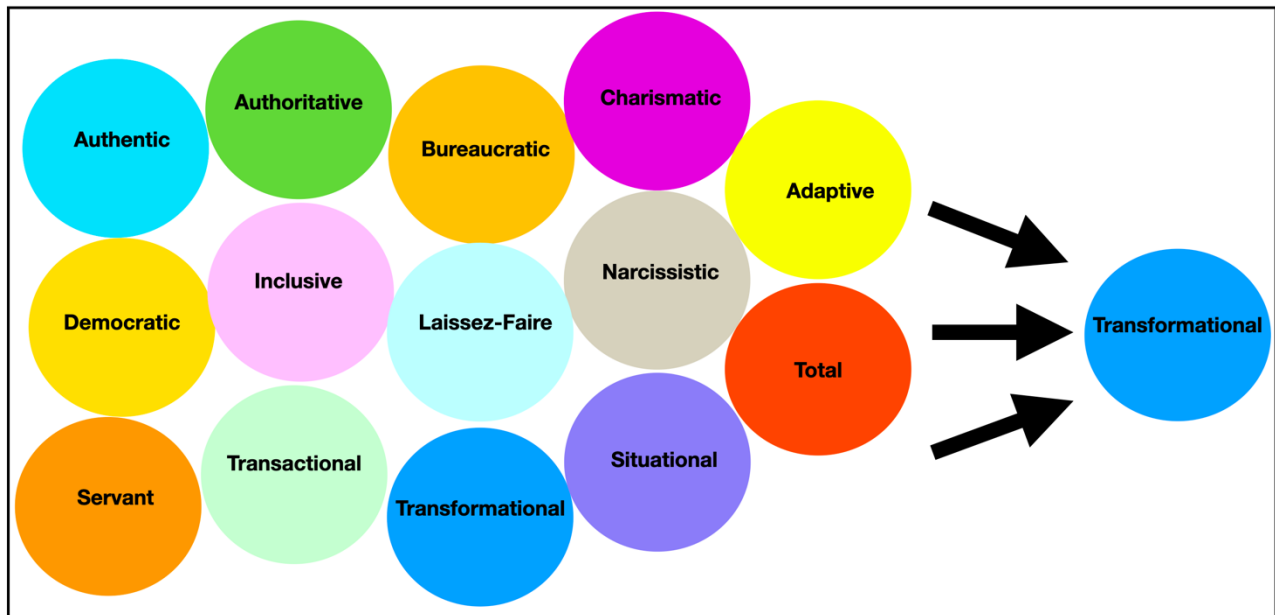
seems there is no common conclusion among the business practitioners, scholars, lecturers, and the researchers on the definition of leadership.

Table 1. Key Leadership Theory Development (Adapted from Kelly, 2019)

Leadership Theory	Year	Major Publications
Great Man Theory	1841	On heroes, hero-worship, and the heroic history (Carlyle, 1841)
Scientific Management	1911	The principles of scientific management (Taylor, 1997)
Behaviorism/ Cognitivism	1943	A theory of human motivation (Maslow, 1943)
Charismatic Leadership	1958	The charismatic leadership (House, 1976; Weber, 1958)
Contingency Theory	1964	A theory of leadership Effectiveness (Fiedler, 1964)
Situational Leadership	1969	Management of Organizational Behavior (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2012; Hersey, Blanchard, & Natemeyer, 1979)
Democratic Leadership	1969	Democratic leadership (Kohlberg, 1969)
Transactional Leadership	1975	A vertical dyad linkage approach to Leadership within formal organizations (Dansereau, Graen & Haga, 1975)
Instrumental Leadership	1975	Path-goal theory of leadership (House & Mitchell, 1975)
Servant Leadership	1977	Servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1985)
Transformational Leadership	1978	Leadership and performance beyond expectations (Bass, 1985a, 1985b), Leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1995; Burns, 2007)
Constructivism/ Cognitivism	1983	Frames of mind (Gardner, 1983)
Bureaucratic Leadership	1989	Bureaucratic leadership (Bensimon, 1989)
Collaborative Leadership	1994	Collaborative advantage: The art of alliances (Kanter, 1994)
Adaptive Leadership	1998	Leadership without easy answers (Heifetz, 1998)
Authentic Leadership	1999	Authentic Leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999)
Distributed Leadership	2002	Distributed leadership as a unit of analysis (Gronn, 2002)

Primal Leadership	2002	Primal leadership (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002)
Laissez-Faire Leadership	2003	Laissez-Faire leadership (Early et al., 2003)
Shared Leadership	2003	Shared leadership: Reframing the hows and whys of leadership (Pearce & Conger, 2003)
Spiritual Leadership	2003	Spiritual Leadership (Fry, 2003)
Ethical Leadership	2006	Ethical leadership (Brown & Trevino 2005; Bavik et al., 2021)
Inclusive Leadership	2006	Inclusive leadership (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006; Sweeney & Bothwick, 2016)
Neuroleadership	2006	Neuroleadership (Rock, 2006, 2015; Katz, 2021)
Discursive	2007	Discursive leadership (Fairhurst, 2007; Aritz et al., 2017)
Total Leadership	2008	Total leadership (Friedman, 2008)
Cross-cultural Leadership	2008	Cross-cultural leadership (Thomas, 2008)
Crisis Leadership	2009	Crisis leadership (Muffet-Willett & Kruse, 2009; Bavik, 2021)
Consequential Leadership	2012	Consequential leadership (Pier, 2012)
Humble Leadership	2012	Humble leadership (Owens & Hekman, 2012)
Holacracy	2015	Holacracy: The new management system for a rapidly changing world (Robertson, 2015)
Positive Leadership	2017	The positive leader: How energy and happiness fuel top-performing team (Muhlfeit & Costi, 2017)
Coaching Leadership	2019	The leader as coach (Ibarra & Scoular, 2019)
Conscious Leadership	2020	Conscious leadership (Mackey, McIntosh & Phipps, 2020)

Diagram 1. Graphical view of some common Leadership models



As reflected in Table 1 in chronological order and the graphic view in Diagram 1 on some popular leadership styles, many leadership theories have emerged in the academic circle since the invention of the Great Man Theory in 1841 (Carlyle, 1841). Then Taylor (1911) focuses more on the workflow process and emphasized more on control and efficiency instead of valuing the employees' motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction. In 1930s, the study of traits became the new interest for many researchers. They stressed the leadership as influence more than domination (Northouse, 2013). The theory of human motivation proposed by the seminal psychologist Maslow (1943, 1954a, 1954b) highlights the five sets of goals for human (e.g., physiological, safety, love & belonging, esteem, and self-actualization) with a behaviorist perspective. In 1950s to 1960s, we witness the rise of leadership skills approach (Katz, 2009), charismatic leadership (Weber, 1958), contingency theory (Fiedler, 1964), and situational leadership (Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson, 2012). These two decades view leadership as what they do in groups with the shared goals and explored how the leaders influence the followers to achieve group goals (Northouse, 2013).

In 1970s, the appearance of the servant leadership in 1977 (Greenleaf, 1985) and transformational leadership in 1978 (Burns, 2007) is a key milestone in the advancement of leadership development in both business and academic fields. The transformational leadership is one of the most popular researched theories since 1990 (Kidwell, 2005). In fact, the concept of transformational leadership was coined by Downton in 1973 (Downton, 1973). According to Burns (2010, p.425-426):

Leaders can also shape and alter and elevate the motives and values and goals of followers through the vital teaching role of leadership. This is transforming leadership. The premise is if

this leadership is that, whatever the separate interests persons might hold, they are presently or potentially united in the pursuit of “higher” goals, the realization of which is tested by the achievement of significant change that represents the collective or pooled interests of leaders and followers.

Burns states the transformational leadership happens when people interact and engages with others “in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to a higher level of motivation and morality” (Burns, 2010, p.20). The transformational leaders are highly conscious about the motives and needs of their followers which can be easily differentiated from the transactional and pseudo-transformational leadership. The transactional leadership simply focuses on the “exchanges” that occur between the leaders and their followers. It tends to be short-term driven and the mutually trust level is not as high compared with the transformational leadership. For pseudo-transformational leader, it is a self-center leadership style as the leaders tend to emphasize on their own interests rather than the interests of the followers (Barling, Christie & Turner, 2008). It is predictable that the trust level between the leader and the follower for pseudo-transformational leadership is even lower than the transactional leaders.

In considering the leadership continuum, Bass suggests that we can view transactional and transformational leadership as a single continuum (Northouse, 2021). For transformational leadership, there are four essential elements. They are i) idealized influence, ii) inspirational motivation, iii) intellectual stimulation, and iv) individualized consideration. For transactional leadership, it includes contingency reward and management by exception (Northouse, 2021). The transformational leaders always strive to grow the followers to their highest potential (Ivey Business School, 2012) with the ultimate goals in driving high performance beyond the expectations. They do not focus on themselves, instead they focus more on the leadership development and growth of their followers (Northouse, 2021). Besides this, they also do not rely on contingent reward and management by exception in leading their followers as the transactional leader. Bass (1999) noted the question on why transformational leadership is more effective than transactional leadership in different sectors (e.g., business, military, industrial, hospital, and educational) is not yet fully researched. This is a major gap in the Literature on transformational and transactional leadership that the scholars and researchers can further explore, examine, and validate in this decade.

In 1976, House develops the charismatic leadership model further with certain personality characteristics, behaviors, and effects on followers (House, 1976). Bass also suggests that a good manager needs to be a good leader, and a good leader needs to be a good manager. To be a good

leader and a good manager are not mutually exclusive, rather they should reinforce the strengths of the leaders and their followers in a virtuous cycle (Bass, 1999). Besides this, Bass argues that both transformational and transactional leadership skills are needed to be effective management and leadership (Kidnell, 2005) as a pioneer. Do we really need both? The validity of this perspective is yet to be studied and validated. It is not clear if a transformational leader can be more effective than a transactional leader in achieving higher organizational performance. This area is worthwhile to be further studied.

An excellent example of transformational leadership is Professor Fred Hollows. He was an Australian eye doctor who spent his life helping those who could not afford the basic eye care. He worked extremely hard to stop avoidable blindness and improve the health of Indigenous Australians. In the late 1960s and 1970s, he travelled with 80 doctors to 465 remote villages, helping more than sixty thousand Indigenous people and improved the health services for Aboriginal people. His life undoubtably has transformed many lives as he believed “the basic attributes of mankind it to look after each other” (The Fred Hollows Foundation, 2012). His life provides an exemplary example of a transformational leader in impacting the life of the patients with individualized consideration.

Bennis and Nanus (1985) expand the application of the transformational leadership to a higher level by articulating four leader strategies in transforming organizations. It is encouraging to see the researchers and scholars continue to add clarity on the definition of transformational leadership. They are summarized as follows:

- set a clear vision of the organization’s future state
- transformational leadership’s social architect of organization
- create trust by making their position known and standing by it
- creatively deploy themselves through positive self-regard and to promote reciprocal relationship with the followers

New leadership model develops over time as demonstrated in Box 1.1 “The Evolution of Leadership Definitions” in the book “Leadership: Theory and Practice. 9th edition” (Northouse, 2021). The leadership styles are expanded significantly compared with 6th edition (Northouse, 2013). It is positive to see the leadership is evolving so that the leaders can choose a better way in leading the followers. The most noticeable update is the new addition of authentic, ethical, spiritual, discursive, humble, and inclusive leadership (Northouse, 2021). In brief, it is important to highlight that Table 1 is not a collectively exhaustive list. Rost (1991) finds out that there are more than 200 different definitions of leadership based on the written materials between 1900 to 1990 (Northouse, 2021).

It is vital that the effectiveness of transformational leadership not only be examined at the individual and team level, but also be investigated at the organizational level on how the transformational leaders drive the vision, mission, strategy, execution, growth mindset, and a customer-centric culture with the followers together. We should analyze it at the individual level between employee and manager, at the group level between managers and their team, and then at the organizational level. The goals are to enhance the organizational capabilities and competencies to achieve stakeholders' benefits and long-term sustainability of the firm (Coffey, 2010). There is a gap in the literature as there is not many studies on transformational leadership and organizational performance at the organizational level.

Finally, it is critical to be aware there are criticisms against the transformational leadership as it contains several weaknesses (Northouse, 2021). It is not a perfect leadership model. For example, it lacks a clear conceptual framework and a gap between the theory and how it is measured (Knippenberg and Sitkin, 2003). Tracey and Hinkin (1998) also find that the idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration are not clearly defined. In addition, some other scholars criticize the validity of Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) in measuring the transformational leadership since the four factors are too correlate with each other (Tejeda, Scandura & Pillai, 2001). The researcher will review and examine whether their findings are accurate, objective, and sound.

Organizational Performance

The study explores the extant literature on organizational performance. Obviously, many scholars are very interested on these two important topics. The following critical questions arise if we want to explore and measure the organizational performance of any organizations through their transformational leaders.

- How do we define “Organizational Performance”?
- If we can define it, how can we measure it?
- What are the measures and the dependent variables?

Based on the latest literature review on performance measurements, the Balanced Scorecard provides an integrative perspective for the following four critical elements in tracking the organizational performance. There are many successful cases in deploying the Balanced Scorecard that leads to a more successful execution of a business strategy (Zorek, 2020). Essentially, it is a management

system that provides the lead and lag indicators for sound business decision making (Kaplan & Norton, 1996).

- **Employee:** employee engagement, learning and development
- **Internal Business Process:** internal business alignment and execution
- **Customer:** customer satisfaction
- **Financial:** company financial results

The link between transformational leadership and organization performance

Based on the meta-analysis of 39 studies in the transformational leadership literature, Lowe, Kroeck, and Sivasubramaniam (1996) discover that leader who exhibits transformational style are more effective leaders with better work results compared with those who demonstrates only transactional leadership. It is further validated by the Dumdum, Lowe, and Avolio (2013) that the transformational leadership style has been tested to correlate positively with performance outcome measures. This research paper will examine if this positive correlation is valid in the ICT industry across the Asia Pacific cross culturally (Hodgetts, 1993a, 1993b). In fact, the transformational leadership is the most researched areas of leadership from 1990 to 2000 according to a comprehensive review of the journals published in the Leadership Quarterly performed by Lowe and Gartner (2000).

Coaching

Besides the transformational leadership and organizational performance, it is vital to explore and understand the latest literatures in coaching. Coaching is a relatively young profession compared with medicine and engineering. The coaching industry was started by W. Timothy Gallwey back in 1974 (W. Timothy Gallwey, 2015). He also highlights that our performance is equal to our potential minus interference (W. Timothy Gallwey, 2001). Starting in 1990s, the coaching practices became more popular in the West since it is a more Western concept (Pansy, 2016). Whitmore (2011) suggests “coaching is unlocking people’s potential to maximize their own performance. It is helping them to learn rather than teaching them.” However, the Oxford Business English Dictionary (2011) defines “coach as a person who trains somebody to do something or gives lessons or advice.” Obviously, the academia and practitioners has not arrived a consistent definition of coaching. According to the International Coaching Federation (ICF) that established in 1995, the coach is not supposed to offer advice to the coachee. In addition, Du Toit (2007, cited in Wiginton, 2020, p.164) points out that

“coaching is not widely identified as an independent discipline.” According to ICF (ICF, 2021), it defines “coaching as partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential.” The coaching process can release the creativity, innovation, unexplored potential talent, and leadership skills.

Coaching is considered as both an independent variable and a moderator in this research. As highlighted by Ulrich (Goldsmith, Lyons & McArthur, 2012, p.xix), there are three core questions that need to be examined for the coaching profession to advance further in the business, non-commercial sector, and academia. The leaders need to know the outcomes of coaching, the requirements of the one being coached, and the required skills of an effective coach.

As one of the outstanding scholars on leadership, organization, and human resources, Ulrich outlines his perspective on the evolution of the coaching progression to a profession. He also explains a typology of coaching outcomes with the following four dimensions i) personal and ii) organizational on x-axis, iii) behavior and iv) outcomes on y-axis (Goldsmith, Lyons & McArthur, 2012, p.xvi). Two influential leadership scholars Bass and Riggio (2006, p.225) suggest that “mentoring, coaching, empowering, developing, supporting, and caring are not only expected leader behaviors, but also necessary for today’s effective leader.”

To have effective coaching as a management practice, it is essential to have a clear understanding of the differences among coaching, mentoring, managing, and leading. Mintzberg (2011) mentions that “managing is neither a science nor a profession; it is a practice, learned primarily through experience, and rooted in context.” On leading, Goffee and Jones (2019) argue that great leaders are skillful in inspiring people, create results, and excite people to extraordinary results of achievement. On mentoring, Dawson (2014) highlights that the researchers still cannot arrive a unifying definition of mentoring even after 30 years of research. Kimsey-House et al. (2018) suggests a mentoring relationship concentrates more on the personal growth than on problem solving while Higgins and Kram (2001) view mentoring as a multiple relationship phenomenon.

Based on Bertrand (2018) study in higher education, he finds the results were positive towards coaching and indicated the strongest associations in transformational leadership is in intellectual stimulation. It is encouraging to see not only the institutions of higher education can consider coaching as a path to remove blind spots and deal with both personal and organizational challenges, but also the transformational leadership by serving as a coach can promote corporate entrepreneurship (Ling et al., 2008). In addition, based on the literature review conducted so far and the study

conducted by Peesker et al. (2019) with 36 sales professionals in a global IT company, both sales leaders and salespeople believe that sales leader behaviors as a coach impact sales performance tremendously. Furthermore, Hui, Law & Lau (2020) examines the effects of guidance and facilitation coaching style on task performance. They discover that facilitation coaching should be more effective than guidance coaching since the former emphasize problem solving and adaptation to changes. Obviously, the coaching research is still evolving at a nascent stage.

In recent years, many studies (Hui & Chan, 2016; Hui, Chan & Wood, 2013; Shipper & Weer, 2011) have been conducted about manager-as-coach and its impacts towards individual, team, and organizational performance. So far, there is no evidence to show the direct linkage between employee coaching (i.e., manager coaching individual subordinates or team) and organizational performance (such as adaptive performance, emotional intelligence, creativity, innovation, and solution-focused). These are the five metrics that the researcher will measure in this study. It seems that if coaching can be treated as a management practice of an organization, we may see its influence on organizational performance. It is an under-researched area in the academia (Hui & Chan, 2016).

In summary, there is a gap on how and why transformational leadership is more effective in achieving higher organizational performance based on the literature review far. It is not clear on the relationships among transformational leadership and coaching, and how they can create higher organizational performance. The researcher aims to explore the top-tier peer-reviewed scholarly academic papers, journals, and research works in the next 2-3 years in order to push out the knowledge frontier in these areas.

4. Hypotheses

Diagram 2 (p.16) highlights the research model that depicts the hypotheses to be tested specifically on the causation and correlation of transformational leadership, organizational performance, and coaching.

To further the findings of Peesker et al. (2019) findings in a global enterprise software company, we develop three hypotheses for this exploratory empirical study of the ICT industry in Asia Pacific.

There are three preliminary hypotheses to be tested and evaluated for this research project. The additional hypotheses for other dependent variables (e.g., employee engagement, customer satisfaction, adaptive performance... etc.) will be added in the final dissertation for the DBA program. Null hypothesis (H_0) and (H_a), where the “0” and “a” in subscript, is presented as: “a” means alternative hypothesis.

H1₀: Transformational leadership is not positively related to organizational performance

H1_a: Transformational leadership is positively related to organizational performance

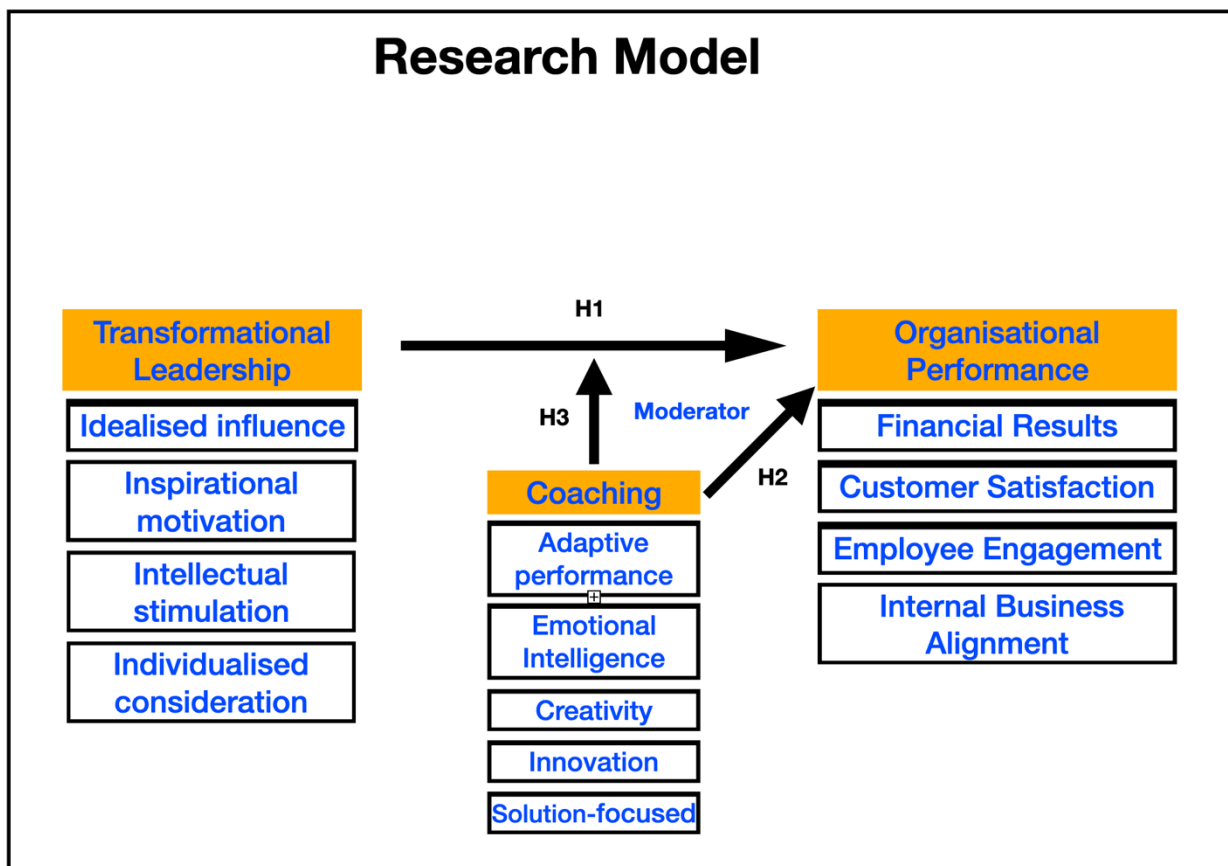
H2₀: Coaching is not associated with higher organizational performance

H2_a: Coaching is associated with higher organizational performance

H3₀: Coaching does not moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance

H3_a: Coaching moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and higher organizational performance

Diagram 2. Research Model



5. Research Design

This research will be conducted based on a research onion approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The research philosophical positions are taking a positivism (scientific, neutral, and objective) and deduction approach based on the collected empirical data. This study applies the cross-sectional design in focusing on the coaches and coachees' interactions and their impact on the organizational performance based on the consideration of time and cost constraints (Bell et al., 2019, p.49). Regarding the reliability, replicability, and validity, the difference between the cross-sectional research and longitudinal design is insignificant (Bell et al., 2019, p.52).

For this study, the transformational leadership is an independent variable, organizational performance is a dependent variable, and coaching is both an independent variable and a moderator. Below is the operationalization of variables on how we measure coaching and organizational performance. For coaching, we focus on the following work-related outcomes (Hui, Law & Lau, 2020): 1) adaptive performance (LePine, 2003), 2) emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995), 3) creativity (Zhou & George, 2001), 4) innovation, and 5) solution focused. For organizational performance, we will measure in four dimensions: 1) employee engagement, 2) internal business alignment, 3) customer satisfaction, and 4) financial results (Kaplan & Norton, 1996). Moreover, the control variables include age, gender, tenure, and education level as these variables are not a focus of this research.

Research Methodology

The study is using mixed methods research over 12 months. The researcher applies a deductive approach (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). The objective is to get a holistic understanding of the research questions through this data collection process. The researcher plans to collect different kinds of data via a multi-method research design as follows for triangulation purpose (Webb, 1966). The researcher will cross-check the findings from both qualitative and quantitative research (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2019). The objective is to improve confidence in findings.

- **Step 1. One-on-one interview (4 months):** Semi-structured interview with 5 business leaders, 5 employees, 5 coaches, and 5 coachees from ICT industry. The pilot testing of the interview questions will be conducted with 4 participants from each category above to enhance the reliability and objectivity. Some additional interviews will be conducted with the coaching experts and leading academics in leadership, and organizational behaviour.

- **Step 2. Focus groups (2 months):** Two sessions with two focus groups with 6-8 participants (one focus group from ICT industry, the other from Oracle). The interview questions will focus on transformational leadership, coaching, and organizational performance. During the qualitative phase, the researcher must take the reliability, validity, trustworthiness, confidentiality, and authenticity criterion into consideration (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019).
- **Step 3. Questionnaire (3 months):** The researcher aims to gather information from the ICT industry practitioners and the participants in the sample consist of the senior leaders, middle managers, frontline employees, coaches, and coachees. The target participants are approximately 2,000 people based on purposive snowball sampling technique. Assume the expected response is estimated to be 10%, the researcher aims to receive 200 survey results. The participants from these industries will be based on a convenience sample since it is more time and cost effective.
- **Step 4. Case study (3 months):** Case study of Oracle focusing in Asia Pacific. The leader-coach, employees from various functions, and coachees will be interviewed in this IT firm so that the research can provide 360-degree view of the reality. The researcher plans to gather the policy documents, in-house coaching practices, and the public available information such as the annual reports and training materials on coaching if available.

Regarding the Questionnaire on transformational leadership, this study plans to conduct this data based on the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Bass & Avolio, 1995). It measures 4 major dimensions of transformational leadership: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. In addition, there are 16 questions in measuring Organizational Performance, and Coaching as a Management Practice (see Appendix A).

The survey results will be analyzed by using Structural Equation Modeling's data analysis method. It aims to evaluate the predictability strength of each independent variable towards the dependent variables. The researcher expects the statistical results can help us to understand better the relationship of the transformational leader and organizational performance with coaching as an independent variable and a moderator. The researcher will provide general descriptions of the research findings. The report will draw inferences from both qualitative (specific details) and quantitative data (numeric trends) in this research (Mertens, 2007).

In addition, the researcher considers the ethical issues, anonymity, and confidentiality thoroughly, and is committed to handle them cautiously in this project. It is essential that the participants are

protected from any harm based on their participation in this study, and the design of this study is not based on any deception (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

6. Projected Pattern of Results for the Proposed Hypotheses

Below is the projected pattern of results for the proposed hypotheses. The researcher expects that there is a positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational performance via coaching as a management practice. Both the transformational leaders and their followers can grow their career, build a stronger mutual trust relationship, and achieve the organizational goals collaboratively and constructively. However, Dixon and Adamson (2011) point out that the results may be different based on the coachees' performance (e.g., best performer, middle performer, and worst performer). We also project that there is a positive relationship between coaching and organizational performance (Peesker, 2019) assuming the coaching practice is effective and there is a mutual trust relationship between the leader as a coach and the coachee (Boyatzis, Smith & Beveridge, 2013). There must be a strong mechanism in tracking the coaching impacts for both the coaches and the coachees for continuous enhancement purpose either electronically or in paper form. Furthermore, we foresee that the coaching has a moderator effect between transformational leadership and organizational performance. The prerequisite is that there must be a strong alignment between the leaders and the individual, dyad, and team on the organizational vision, mission, and goals.

The organisations provide in-house coaching services will have more motivated, engaging, and happy employees (Cable, 2020). However, the degree of impact may vary based on the age, gender, nationality, personality, motivation, trust between the coach and the coachee, length and duration of coaching sessions, and the size of the organization.

We should be cautious that coaching is only one of the many elements in enhancing the organizational performance (Schrage et al. 2019). It is reasonable to project that effective coaching can lead to better organizational performance. However, it may not guarantee the long-term organizational success due to the fierce competition nature of ICT industry. It is logical to foresee that effective transformational leadership via coaching can enhance the organizational competitiveness and make positive impacts to the followers, family, the community, and other stakeholders. The key difference is the level of the impact.

7. Conclusion

Since the launch of this research proposal started in December 2020, the researcher has a lot of quiet times to reflect on his personal leadership, managerial, and coaching journey. In retrospect, the preliminary study of the research topic **“Influence of Transformational Leadership on Organizational Performance via Coaching as a Management Practice”** has clarified many outstanding leadership questions .

Based on the in-depth literature review and the professional experience of the researcher as a practicing leader and coach, it indicates that there is sufficient evidence to support the following conclusion for the three research questions. Of course, these findings are subjected to further verification and validation.

- Transformational leadership can lead to higher organizational performance positively
- Coaching can lead to higher organizational performance positively
- Coaching has a moderator effect between transformational leadership and organizational performance

8. Theoretical and Practical Contribution

Below are the plausible theoretical and practical contribution in exploring the influence of transformational leadership on organizational performance via coaching as a management practice.

From the theoretical perspective, this study will share new light on why the transformational leadership is more effective than the transactional and pseudo-transformational leadership. Based on the studies have been conducted about manager-as-coach and its impacts to individual, team, and organizational performance. So far, there are no evidence to show the direct linkage between employee coaching (i.e., manager coaching individual subordinates or team) and organizational performance, but only indirect mediated by individual or team performance. This research can add new knowledge to our understanding of the relationship between employee coaching and organizational performance since no one study coaching and its impacts in organizational level. Most of the existing study is on individual and team level.

For the practical contributions, this empirical exploratory study of the ICT industry and the case study of Oracle will enrich our understanding of the impact of transformational leadership on the

organizational performance through coaching in this extreme competitive industry with a cross-cultural perspective across Asia Pacific. Since coaching is still a very young profession, the availability of in-depth research papers on coaching in ICT industry with a cross-cultural perspective is scarce. This paper is attempting to get both an inside-out and outside-in view on the influence of transformational leadership and the coaching practices on the organizational performance. It also helps us to understand better the Hofstede dimensions of culture in the coaching profession (Hofstede, 1993b; Hofstede, 1993c; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010).

Leadership is a complex topic. Since leadership is an art, each leader needs to strive to be a better one as a lifelong learner, create high performing team, and ultimately lead to high organizational performance. Transformational leaders can be more effective in leading team and organization if they practice coaching skills diligently. Most importantly, the transformational leaders first need to take good care of their mental, spiritual, emotional, and physical health as it is a challenging task to lead effectively in this complex world. If the transformational leaders able to navigate these challenges together with the followers effectively, it is imaginable that we can see a workplace full of happiness, trust, collaborative, resilience, and positive growth mindset (Boyatzis, Smith & Beveridge, 2013).

In summary, an exceptional transformational leader by serving as a coach (Greenleaf, 1985) needs to embrace a cross-cultural, diversity & inclusion (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2006), and human-centric passion and love (Seligman, 2017). The researcher is very optimistic about the future.

Appendix A. Questionnaire

Preliminary sample questions on Transformational Leadership from the followers' perspective

I. Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) Rater Form (5x-Short)

(Source: <https://www.mindgarden.com/16-multifactor-leadership-questionnaire>)

Using a 5-point behavioral scale (Not at all = 0, Once in a while = 1, Sometimes = 2, Fairly often = 3, Frequently, if not always = 4)

The Person I am rating

1. Re-examines critical assumptions to question whether they are appropriate..... 0 1 2 3 4
2. Talks about their most important values and beliefs..... 0 1 2 3 4
3. Seeks differing perspectives when solving problems..... 0 1 2 3 4
4. Talks optimistically about the future..... 0 1 2 3 4
5. Instills pride in me for being associated with him/her..... 0 1 2 3 4
6. Talks enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished..... 0 1 2 3 4
7. Specifies the importance of having a strong sense of purpose..... 0 1 2 3 4
8. Spends time teaching and coaching..... 0 1 2 3 4
9. Goes beyond self-interest for the good of the group..... 0 1 2 3 4
10. Treats me as an individual rather than just as a member of a member..... 0 1 2 3 4
11. Acts in a way that builds my respect..... 0 1 2 3 4
12. Considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions..... 0 1 2 3 4
13. Displays a sense of power and confidence..... 0 1 2 3 4
14. Articulating a compelling vision of the future..... 0 1 2 3 4
15. Considering me as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others..... 0 1 2 3 4
16. Gets me to look at problems from many different angles..... 0 1 2 3 4
17. Helps me to develop my strengths..... 0 1 2 3 4
18. Suggests new ways of looking at how to complete assignments..... 0 1 2 3 4
19. Emphasizes the importance of having a collective sense of mission..... 0 1 2 3 4
20. Expresses confidence that goals will be achieved..... 0 1 2 3 4

II. Preliminary sample questions on Organizational Performance

The Person I am rating...

1. Acts in ways that builds customer success..... 0 1 2 3 4

2. Is promoting a customer-centric culture.....	0	1	2	3	4
3. Is meeting with the customers diligently.....	0	1	2	3	4
4. Is effective in driving employee engagement.....	0	1	2	3	4
5. Is encouraging cross-functional collaboration.....	0	1	2	3	4
6. Is promoting lifelong learning.....	0	1	2	3	4
7. Is driving a growth mindset	0	1	2	3	4
8. Is emphasizing operational excellence.....	0	1	2	3	4
9. Is effective in driving change.....	0	1	2	3	4
10. Is effective in meeting the financial goals.....	0	1	2	3	4
11. Is effective in meeting the shareholders expectation.....	0	1	2	3	4
12. Is promoting Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) initiative.....	0	1	2	3	4
13. Cares about the local community and the underprivileged groups.....	0	1	2	3	4
14. Is effective in leading the team and/or organization as a coach.....	0	1	2	3	4
15. Is energetic and passionate in promoting positive change.....	0	1	2	3	4
16. Is embracing diversity and inclusion culture.....	0	1	2	3	4

III. Preliminary sample questions on Coaching as a Management Practice (Adapted from Wiginton, 2018)

1. Who is your manager and/or coach?
2. How long have you been being coached?
3. How likely would you be to recommend coaching to others?
4. Do you believe you have made personal improvement (communication, conflict resolution, leadership, etc.) as a direct result of coaching? (1-100: None - Moderate - Radical)
5. Do you believe you have made progress as a businessperson (decision maker, better planner, more effective and knowledgeable) as a direct result of coaching? (1-100: None - Moderate - Radical)
6. Compared to the time and expense of coaching, how would you evaluate your return on investment (ROI)? (Very Negative ROI - Breakeven - Very Positive ROI)
7. What are the most positive impacts of coaching you have experienced? (Please be specific)
8. Please evaluate the benefits you, your team, and your organization have received from coaching (1-100: None - Moderate - Radical)
 - Adaptive performance
 - Emotional intelligence
 - Creativity

- Innovation
- Solution-focused

9. I become more solution-focused..... 0 1 2 3 4
10. I am not hesitant about changing the way s/he did the task..... 0 1 2 3 4
11. I find the coaching session can enhance my emotional intelligence..... 0 1 2 3 4
12. I suggest new ways to achieve goals or objectives..... 0 1 2 3 4
13. I come up with creative solutions to problems..... 0 1 2 3 4
14. I become more innovative..... 0 1 2 3 4
15. I become more solution-focused..... 0 1 2 3 4

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