

Transformational Leadership and Work Performance of Police Officers in Cambodian Provincial Police Commissariats

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the relationship between transformational leadership and the work performance of Cambodian police officers in provincial police commissariats. Mixed approaches were used to collect the data by adapting from the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) and the individual work performance questionnaire – IWPQ. A total of 267 participants were deputy police commissariats, office chiefs, and deputy office chiefs working in the six target provinces – Kompong Cham, Kandal, Koh Kong, Svay Rieng, Banteay Meanchey, and Siem Reap province. The study found similar effects of transformational leadership (14.6%) and transactional leadership (14.5%) on work performance. Police leaders built and strengthened relationships, met needs, encouraged, motivated, and supported subordinates, and used the stick-and-carrot approach to enable the staff to perform their tasks. However, statistics explain the increase in applying transformational leadership trends and the transactional approach in the Cambodian context. This finding implies the necessity of extending transformational leadership practice among police leaders in the current context of Cambodia.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that has been linked to having effects on work performance [1], [2], [3], [4]. It was also claimed to be more effective than other leadership styles, including transactional leadership [5]. For instance, a recent study of transformational leadership with 383 participants from the top, middle, and lower-level ranks of the Kenya National Police Service in Nyeri County confirmed that police leaders met the needs of their officers by acting as mentors or coaches, listening, and providing support [6]. Moreover, police leaders recognize the creativity and innovation of their staff as an

inspiration and motivation that keeps them performing beyond expectations. In addition, a meta-analysis of the full range of leadership models by Russell [7] with police leaders, managers, and subordinate officers in the United States and international law enforcement agencies such as Australia, New Zealand, Turkey, Slovenia, and middle Eastern countries comprising of 1,939 police officers found that transformational leadership has a strong positive significance difference the insight of effective leadership, extra work commitment, and gratification among subordinates compared to other leadership style as transactional and Laissez-faire leadership approaches.

In the policing field, the work of police officers is dangerous and life-threatening, among other hazardous jobs [8]. In this respect, the leadership and command of police leaders play crucial roles in guiding and reinforcing the standard of practice of police officers in all police operations. Weakness and negative attitudes of leaders are factors leading to carelessness in the performance behaviour of subordinate officers [9], [10]. In Cambodia, police leaders were found effective in a recent study by Kimsan Eng, who used motivation, job satisfaction, commitment, and service dedication as indicators of police leadership [11]. In addition, the reports of GCNP [12] and the Ministry of Interior [13] noted the strong capability of police leaders to prevent events that could affect the peace and stability, safety of the people, security, and social order of the country. Though police leaders can lead police officers, bringing success to the police organization, research on transformational leadership practice in police organizations is limited to the context of Cambodia, especially the study on transformational leadership effectiveness on the police officers' work performance in Cambodia is the main aim of the study. to researchers, practitioners, and police training institutions as it provided and as it contributed to the existing body of knowledge. Therefore, the objectives of this study are to (1) evaluate the quality and effectiveness of police leadership, (2) identify the leadership styles of the police leaders, and (3) assess the transformational leadership and work performance of police officers in the provincial police commissariats.

2. LEADERSHIP APPROACH AND WORK PERFORMANCE

2.1. Styles of leadership

There are extensive studies on leadership and styles of leadership that influence the success and failure of an organization [14]. Northouse [15] defines leadership as an individual's influence on a group of people to accomplish common goals. In this respect, leaders share their vision, missions, stimulation, motivation, encouragement, and recognition so that subordinates produce high-quality results [14], [15]. Alsuwaidi and Mansor [1] and Meaklim and Sims [16] claimed that it is more interesting to understand leadership in police organizations as it is one of the most important indicators of adapting to the dynamic context of crime. In this regard, this study reviewed existing literature on the leadership of police organizations to better understand how the police force performs their task professionally to combat crime effectively. The most popular approaches to leadership were transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Transformational leadership is a leadership approach studied by many researchers and scholars around the globe. In the workplace, transformational leadership was claimed to be the most common leadership approach ever used. The use of

transformational leadership is not only in the private sector and civil public sector, but also in the police sector. This was revealed in studies such as [3], [17], [18], [19]. Different findings assured of the importance of using this style. Northouse [15] noted that transformational leadership is changing and transforming subordinates.

To enable changing and transforming individuals, transformational leaders assess the motives of their subordinates, meet their demands, and treat them equally as human individuals. This responds to the feelings, principles, integrity, standards, and enduring goals of the organization when subordinates transform. There were four components or “4Is” of transformational leadership in theory. First, idealized influence. Second, inspirational motivation. Third, intellectual stimulation. Finally, individual consideration. These 4Is were the components that leaders used to influence changes and transformation in subordinates' lives. The first element, idealized influence, is explained by leaders with charismatic and exemplary role models for their very high moral standards and ethical conduct in doing the right thing [15], [20].

Along with vision and a sense of mission, sharing with their subordinates, these leaders gain trust and respect from employees. The second element, inspirational motivation, describes how leaders motivate subordinates to work hard to accomplish the organization's vision and mission. In this component, the individual's efforts and team spirit are enhanced. The third element suggested that leaders allow subordinates to use their creativity and innovation against their beliefs and values. Leaders encourage employees to develop new approaches, think critically, take part in problems, learn to do things on their own, and take part in problem-solving carefully. Lastly, individual consideration demonstrates the act of leaders to coach and advise employees to reach their potential. Supportive environments and careful listening are applied to the needs of each subordinate.

Transactional leadership is another leadership approach. In this approach, leaders focus their leadership on the organization's roles, responsibilities, and goals. Leaders use tough measures in their command-and-control work performance. Dussault et al. [18] claimed that organizational leaders apply transformational leadership to daily work routines to achieve organizational objectives and activities. Thus, transactional leaders learn the good application of the work performance of subordinates, and their working system must be instructed and organized clearly [17], [21]. Transactional leaders use three core elements – rewards, intervention, and regular control and correct performance – to control the accomplishments of subordinates' performance [22]. Jaqua and Jaqua [23] claimed that transactional leaders use rewards and punishment to influence the subordinate's performance. In this respect, leaders balance the needs of subordinates and then respond to them based on the level of work performance before rewarding them [23], [24]. In their authority, transactional leaders evaluate and correct subordinates' performance and provide training for capacity development when the performance is not up to the set standard. Thus, transactional leadership emphasizes the roles and responsibilities of subordinates based on rewards and punishment, which are in the personal interest of individuals [21]. The fair leadership approach refers to the un-leadership or leadership not responsible for their obligations [13]. Laissez-faire leaders delay decisions, do not give feedback, and ignore the work of subordinates. This leadership approach is over-democratic because it delegates all

decision-making authorities to subordinates. Thus, laissez-faire leadership is passive and ineffective [25], [26]. This leadership approach has negative effects on the trust of the leaders and the organization as well. The study of Tosunoglu [23] found that the immediate supervisor of the subordinates was the foundation that influenced the reduction of the organization's trust through laissez-faire leadership practice. This leadership affects subordinates' expectations, leading to work absence and passive participation.

On the other hand, laissez-faire leadership allows subordinates to observe the inability of the leaders to meet their needs. However, Tosunoglu [23] and Malki and Juan [27] claimed that laissez-faire leadership is appropriate if leaders use it with high-skill subordinates who allow them to show their competency in work accomplishments as part of the motivation. It is consistent with what Iqbal et al. [24] asserted: empowering subordinates in decision-making is the opportunity to assist them in trusting themselves in their performance. In this regard, the behaviour of leaders to meet the expectations of the subordinates and their work performance will improve [25], [26], [28].

2.2. The styles of leadership and work performance

Performance has been evaluated as an essential element of the organization [29]. This means subordinates should be valued for their performance to be a competitive workforce. Bashir et al. [27] defined work performance as how workers perform their duties in the organization, aligning with the work norms of the organization. The subordinates' work performance reflects their commitment to achieving organizational goals [30] because it benefits individual employees and the organization [31]. For such benefits, subordinates will commit sweat and tears to reach the goals, using their utmost competence and skills. Widyastuti and Hidayat [32] identified individual work performance with three dimensions. These were task performance, contextual performance, and counterproductive performance. Task performance refers to the proficiency or ability of subordinates to perform their core tasks. Subordinates can plan and organize work to perform quality work by transforming materials into goods and services.

In the second dimension, contextual performance is an extra behaviour, and action exceeds routine tasks. Its conducts were not mentioned in the job description section. Moreover, contextual performance improves the organization's effectiveness through its psychological, social, and organizational work context. The last dimension of work performance is counterproductive performance, which reveals the behaviour of the subordinates against the organizational goal. Subordinates with counterproductive behaviour complain, misuse information, take actions affecting the organization's image, and work poorly. Numerous enormous studies have indicated that work performance is strongly affected by the organization's leadership style. Out of the styles of leadership, transformational leadership has been claimed to influence the work performance of employees much more than they are expected to [15], [17], [20]. To achieve such high performance, transformational leadership creates a supportive environment between leaders and subordinates, improving their morale and motivation, identifying subordinates' idealized goals, promoting their thinking to act beyond self-interest, and enabling them to meet their higher-level needs [13]. This transformation is a process that needs time for

transformational leaders to interact with employees. Musa et al. [18] noted that once leaders use the four I's of transformational leadership, their subordinates will be more productive and better, and become successful individuals. Significant relationships have been identified between transformational leadership and work performance in private organizations and police institutions, as shown by the study by Geyer and Steyrer [4] and Rafia and Sudiro [33]. However, very little study on transformational leadership and work performance in police organizations in Cambodia, which motivates this study to investigate.

3. METHOD

3.1 Study design and setting

A cross-sectional study was conducted in 6 provinces of Cambodia – Kompong Cham, Kandal, Koh Kong, Svay Rieng, Banteay Meanchey, and Siem Reap province from March to May 2024. This study site was selected due to its demographic characteristics in the plateau, plain, and coastal zones, which had mixed information on the density of population and crime rate levels, as elaborated in police annual operation reports.

3.2 Eligibility Criteria

The study applied Yamane Taro's method [34], which drew a total sample of 243. The survey respondents were randomly selected, including 30 (12%) deputy police commissioners, 75 (31%) office chiefs, and 138 (57%) deputy office chiefs who were invited to fill out the face-to-face survey questionnaire. Additionally, 24 participants were purposively selected for in-depth interviews to gain detailed information on their experiences in leadership and command for police tasks. Quantitative findings complemented the information from in-depth interviews of these police leaders. Among these, 6 were police commissioners, 6 were deputy police commissioners responsible for human resources, 6 were deputy police commissioners responsible for the secretariat, and 6 were office chiefs of staff. Most participants have experienced leadership positions that have lasted less than 10 to nearly 30 years. Due to the seniority and level of position, the majority (90.1%) of participants were males, and only 9.9% were females.

3.3 Variables and Measurements

The study adopted the multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Avolio and Bass [35] and the individual work performance questionnaire – IWPQ by Koopmans et al. [36]. The questionnaires were piloted with 50 police leaders at the Police Academy of Cambodia and the General Department of Human Resources. These questionnaires covered three sections. Section I seeks demographic information: entity, position, rank, sex, age, qualification, and leadership experiences. Section II asks for transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. Section III identifies the individual work performance of police leaders. The validity and reliability tests were done to ensure the consistency of the survey instrument. See Tables 1 and 2 below for the Cronbach's Alpha test result.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha of Leadership Approaches and Work Performance

	Cronbach's Alpha	Items	Reliability
Transformational Leadership	0.932	20	Excellent
Transactional Leadership	0.776	12	Acceptable
Laissez Faire Leadership	0.816	4	Good
Task Performance	0.858	7	Good
Contextual Performance	0.926	12	Excellent
Counterproductive Performance	0.882	8	Good

3.4 Data Collection and Analysis

The data collection was conducted from March to May 2024. Participants were invited and informed about the informed consent, privacy, and confidentiality protection of their participation. Additionally, the data collection survey questionnaires and interview techniques were used to ensure the quality of the data. This study cleaned and analyzed collected data using IBM SPSS v.25 to generate empirical findings responding to the research objectives. Cronbach's Alpha was tested to ensure the validity and reliability of the survey questionnaires. Moreover, the study used linear regression analysis to determine if there is a relationship between the independent variable – transformational leadership and the dependent variable – work performance of police officers.

Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data in relation to the leadership practice of police leaders and the work performance of police officers. The following steps were used to analyze the qualitative data. First, the data was organized and coded into themes in response to the research objectives after the data collection. Finally, the data was interpreted and input into the paper.

The findings from quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to complement each other and compared with the existing literature to ensure the applicability of interpretation and reporting.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

To ensure its ethical considerations, the study received a letter of approval from the Police Academy of Cambodia, the General Department of Human Resources of MoI, GCNP, and Provincial Police Commissariats. All participants in the study volunteered after agreeing to the written informed consent. The personal issues that could harm the human subjects who participated in this study were removed, and all the collected data were used only for this study. The study results were written universally without mentioning participants from any locations.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Quality and Effectiveness of Leadership in Policing

The organization can achieve its goals depending on the quality and effectiveness of its leaders. The study found that police leaders have education from lower secondary schools to doctoral degrees (Figure 1) and were competent and confident in their leadership positions (Figure 2 and Figure 3). Many of them held leadership positions for many years, teaching them to understand the workflow, the roles and responsibilities as leaders, and to motivate subordinates to increase their solidarity in the organization. In this position, police leaders

attempt to be role models for individuals in their organizations, hoping their subordinates will follow in their footsteps. This finding reflects what Bushra et al. [12] asserted that leaders who wanted to influence their subordinates required the adaptation of attitudes from rigid to friendly, expressing support, providing vision, culturing and nurturing hope and dreams, accepting innovation and creativity of subordinates, individual considerations, and extending communication.

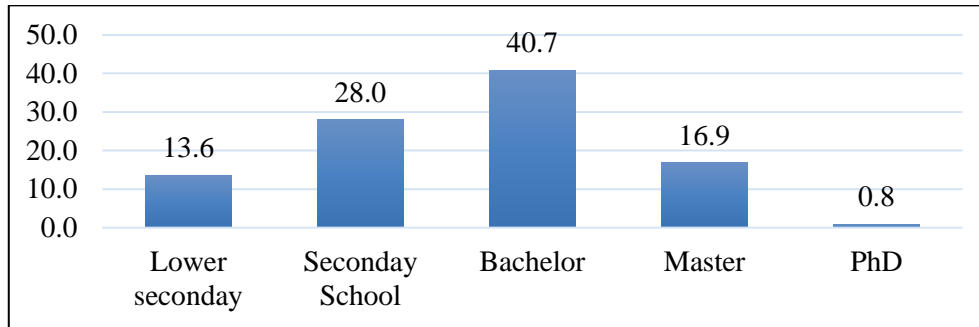


Figure 1. Percentage Qualification of Participants

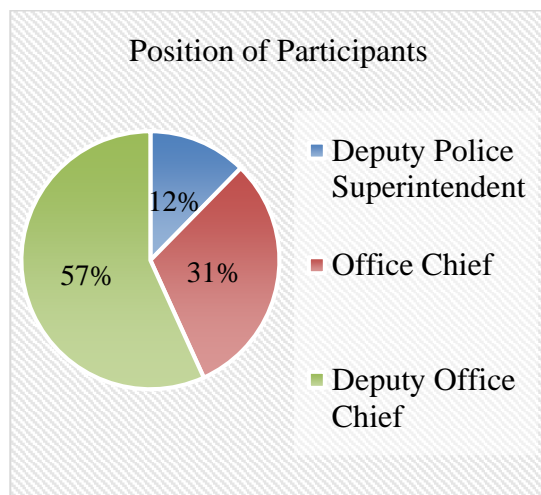


Figure 2. Positions of Participants

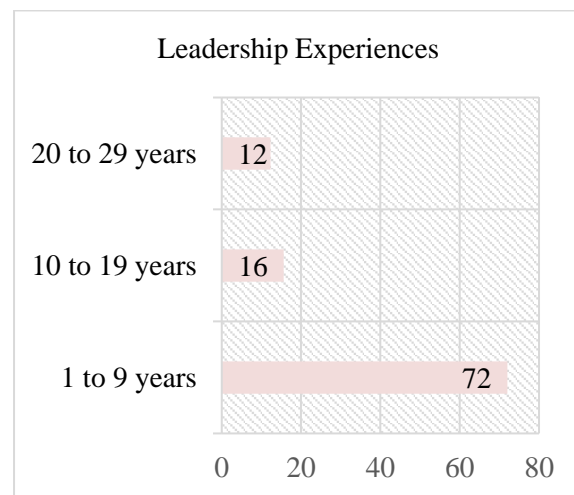


Figure 3. Leadership Experiences

On the other hand, the study found that police leaders are capable of leading police officers to crack down and arrest criminals at the crime scenes effectively and on time after receiving information about the incident. Hence, Modise [37] wrote that strong leadership in policing is the foundation for promoting public safety and confidence and ensuring the effective and timely implementation of the services. For Modise [37], effective leadership is expressed through both personal and organizational leadership practice. The leaders must be an example to subordinates for their professionalism and integrity, allowing confidence and trust from the public and their police subordinates. Also, effective leadership is demonstrated by the capacity of the leaders to plan, organize, lead, and control as well as to carry out a mission, develop a strategy to complete the goals, facilitate the processes and procedures, and perform other leadership tasks of the organization [37]. Related to this literature, this study found that police leaders in each provincial police commissariat have made plans, deployed the police force to the targets, applied information sharing and reporting and

requesting commands from police leaders, commanded the operations, and followed up on meetings regularly. In the events to arrest the criminals, police leaders actively led the operations. Moreover, police leaders successfully organized work plans, staffing police officers, solving problems, and predicting situations.

However, to guarantee the effectiveness of the police operation, police leaders continued to send their police officers to attend capacity development in various training locally and internationally. Police leaders expected trained officers to be important for police operations fighting against crimes. This result is consistent with the study of Chezue and Mbuti [38], who concluded that training, job instruction, on-job training, off-job training, and coaching or mentoring of the leaders effectively influenced police work performance.

4.2 Leadership Style Approach Used in Provincial Police Commissariats

Leadership in policing is the most difficult of all the other responsibilities in management. The selection of an appropriate leadership style that meets the demands of police subordinates and citizens would make the successful implementation of policy obligations [2]. This study found that the higher the position of the police leaders, the more the transformational leadership approach was used. Figure 4 below shows that the mean score of deputy police superintendents was higher when using transformational leadership compared to office chiefs and deputy office chiefs at the provincial police commissariats.

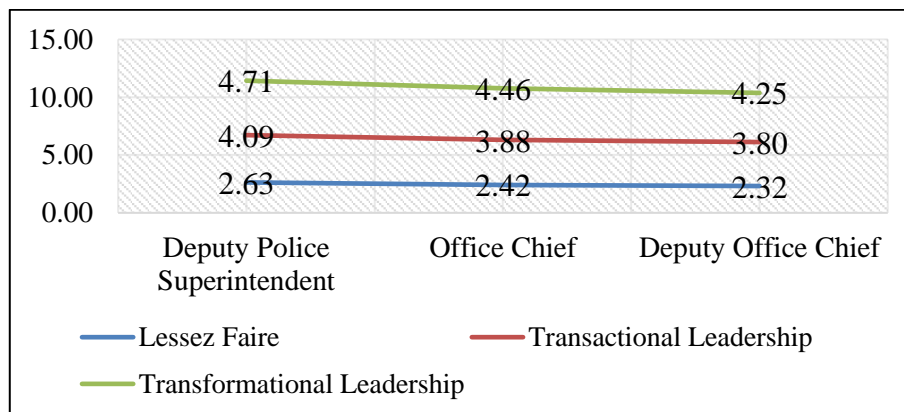


Figure 4. Positions of Police Leaders and Leadership Approaches

The above finding was also claimed by the analysis of Pearson's correlations of the positions of respondents and the leadership approach of police leaders (Table 3). This finding is consistent with Barth-Farkas and Vera [39], noticing that transformational leadership is the best leadership style in police work in times of change in the context of social and world development. Also, it was considered a determinant that influenced the subordinates' behaviours [39]. This finding reveals that the peace, stability, and social development in Cambodia's context now is the opportunity for Cambodian police leaders to do their best to fulfill their subordinates' needs and offer the best possible services to the citizens. Also, police leaders understand that transformational leadership can influence and transform their subordinates and create trust and commitment to work. This enables police leaders to be effective leaders.

Table 2. Pearson's Correlations of Position of Respondents and Leadership Approach

	Position	Laissez-Faire	Transformational	Transactional
Position	-			
Laissez-Faire	-0.053	-		
Transformational	-.164*	0.041	-	
Transactional	-.157*	.317**	.401**	-

*. Is significant level at $p < .05$
 **.is significant level at $p < .01$.

However, transactional leadership was also identified, which means that in Cambodia's context, leadership in policing still requires transactional leadership for the interaction between police leaders and subordinates. Even though police leaders tend to be in a higher position as deputy police superintendents, the application of transactional leadership still exists more at the level of deputy office chiefs in the provincial police commissariats. The different use of leadership between the deputy director and the office chief and deputy office chiefs reflected the hierarchy of the individual leaders in the provincial police commissariats – top, middle, and low-level management – required deputy office chiefs to use transactional leadership with subordinates.

4.3 Work Performance of Police Officers

The accomplishment of organizational objectives depends on the performance of subordinates. The work performance of police officers in provincial police commissariats was found to have a relationship with the positions of the police officers. The result showed that police officers at all levels did have low counterproductive behaviour, while they tended to perform tasks based on context and task performance (Table 3).

Table 3. Pearson's Correlations of Position and Work Performance

	Position	Work Performance	Contextual Performance	Counterproductive Behavior
Position	-			
work Performance	-.136*	-		
Work Context	-.195**	.688**	-	
Counterproductive Behavior	0.072	-0.006	-0.004	-

*. Is significant level at $p < .05$
 **.is significant level at $p < .01$.

These findings indicated that police officers at all levels perform work considerably based on the context and the nature of tasks, while some counterproductive behaviour exists as the nature of human beings, which is inevitable. The qualitative findings also assured that police officers sometimes expressed boredom with tasks due to various reasons such as lack of motivation from leaders, stress, workload, and health problems. Studies such as Chikwem [40] also found that job stress contributed to police officers ' low work performance. However, the work performance of police officers was identified by other contributing factors such as knowledge and skills, job security, compensation aids [41], social support, emotional intelligence [8], and the fair treatment of the police organization to police officers

[42]. Therefore, the work performance of police officers in the provincial police commissariats was linked not only to the position of the police officers to work based on tasks or context but also to other contributing factors, especially the motivation and fair treatment of police leaders to their subordinates. In this respect, leaders are influential in the performance of police officers.

4.4 Relationship between Transformational/Transactional Leadership and Work Performance

Many studies confirmed the connection between transformational leadership and work performance in organizations. For instance, the study of Alsuwaidi [2], Bass [5], Russell [7], Jankingthong and Rurkkhum S [43], and Shang [44]. Consistent with previous literature and findings, this study's results confirmed a significant difference between transformational leadership and work performance. The statistical finding confirmed that 14.6% of transformational leadership influenced work performance [$F(1,241) = 41,04, p < .000$]. This result rejected the null hypothesis H1o. See Tables 4 and 5 below.

Table 4. Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.381a	0.146	0.142	0.49212

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership

Table 5. ANOVA test results

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	9.940	1	9.940	41.043	.000b
	Residual	58.365	241	0.242		
	Total	68.305	242			

a. Dependent Variable: Police Performance
b. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership

Qualitative findings supported this statistical finding of transformational leadership. The findings from qualitative interviews were noted based on each of the components of transformational leadership. First, based on the idealized influence component, the study identified that police leaders encouraged police subordinates to keep building relationships and trust with their co-workers and the public in all police operations, of which police leaders were the ones to model the interaction, starting from the provincial police commissariats. Second, regarding the inspirational motivation component, the study found that police leaders motivated their subordinates to work hard to achieve the set plan, to take a detailed concern on every task they handle or work on, and to care for solidarity in the relationship with other co-workers. Third, in the creativity and innovation component, police leaders enabled, valued, and supported new ideas, creativity, and innovation to find possible and convenient solutions for police work and operations. Finally, in the individual consideration component, police leaders have very often met the needs of police subordinates regarding

their capacity improvement, sought training, and sent them for capacity building once police leaders noticed the lower levels of job performance of their subordinates.

Additionally, police leaders frequently visited or sent their representatives to visit police subordinates who had health issues or were injured from police operations to express their concerns and care. A similar finding was also claimed in the impact of transformational leadership on work performance and the practice of innovation in police organizations in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates [45]. These claims ensured that police leaders possess transformational leadership qualities. Thus, police leaders can strengthen the operation team, build solidarity, and motivate work commitment among police subordinates [3], [8].

Transactional leadership was also found to have a relationship with work performance, though it was not set in the objectives of this study. Similar to transformational leadership, transactional leadership influences 14.5% of the work performance of police subordinates [$F(1,241) = 40,737, p < .000$]. This result rejects the null hypothesis H2o. See Tables 6 and 7 below.

Table 6. Model Summary

Model Summary				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.380 ^a	0.145	0.141	0.49238

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transactional Leadership

Table 7. ANOVA Test Result

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	9.876	1	9.876	40.737	.000 ^b
Residual	58.428	241	0.242		
Total	68.305	242			

a. Dependent Variable: Police Performance
 b. Predictors: (Constant), Transactional Leadership

Qualitative results demonstrated that police leaders sometimes used punishment for police subordinates who performed tasks without acknowledgement from the leaders. Rules and regulations of police organizations were required to be for everyone. This result reflects that the work performance should be accomplished based on the set plan [46]. However, the relationship between transactional and transformational leadership on work performance in provincial police commissariats is an appropriate result for the present context of policing in Cambodia. Such a relationship informed the high performance of police subordinates over expectation [13].

5. CONCLUSION

Police leaders are the most important and challenging position, among other difficulties, in the managerial process. The study results found that police leaders at the provincial police commissariats effectively used transformational and transactional leadership approaches in the Cambodian context. Police leaders have a strong capability to

influence police subordinates through building relationships, meeting needs, encouraging solidarity, motivating, supporting, and acting as role models. They also practised rewards and punishments, or sticks and carrots, to accomplish the tasks assigned to police subordinates at the provincial police commissariats. However, statistical findings informed the trend of using transformational leadership, which was noticed to have increased significantly with work performance, along with the transactional leadership approach in the Cambodian context. The study concludes that transformational and transactional leadership enabled work performance among police subordinates, but transformational leadership brought about higher work performance beyond expectations. These findings imply implications for police leaders and organizations to consider the extension of transformational leadership practice. Training on transformational leadership should be organized for all municipal and provincial police commissariats and GCNP leaders of all levels.

On the other hand, the finding of the relationship between transactional leadership and work performance implied that Cambodian municipal and provincial police commissariats and police leaders in the MoI should transform themselves into transformational leaders because transformational leadership was found to be more effective than transactional leadership. The current context of Cambodia requires transformational leadership rather than transactional leadership. However, the limitation of this study is acknowledged due to the lack of existing literature on the application of the police leadership approach, which was restricted for internal security reasons. This study suggests further study on police organizations at the GCNP and the MoI, and the trend of using transformational leadership, which this study did not focus on.

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