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EXPLORING THE DYNAMICS OF LEADERSHIP STYLE IN FATONI UNIVERSITY THAILAND


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Abstract:

This study investigates the association of sustainable operations practices (SOPs) to institution's performance in waqf management in higher education institutions with an emphasis on Fatoni University, Thailand. We systematically reviewed the literature and meta-analysed the correlations to evaluate the direction and strength of the SOP performance relationship and complemented this with qualitative insights from selected case studies. The results show a strong positive relationship, as 14 empirical relationships have found significant positive correlations. It indicates that the adoption of SOPs improves the efficiency, accountability, transparency and long-term sustainability of waqf institutions. There were an additional 12 relationships moderated by leadership style, institution's culture, governance structure and institution's environment which indicated that the effectiveness of SOPs depends on the internal and external institutio conditions. These results support the contingency theory that institutions effectiveness depends on the fit between the orientation of leadership and the environmental context. Limitations of the study include a small number of empirical studies that report the statistical details (correlations, effect sizes, standardized coefficients) required for robust meta-analysis. From a practitioner perspective, the study points to the importance of context sensitive leadership, governance and institutions reforms to get the best out of SOPs. This study contributes its multidimensional approach which combines quantitative meta-analysis and qualitative case evidence for a more inclusive understanding of the effect of sustainable operations practices on waqf management performance.

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Keywords:

Leadership Style; Waqf Management; Sustainable Operations Practices; Organizational Performance; Higher Education; Thailand



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Introduction

Leadership is increasingly understood as a dynamic and multidimensional process that goes beyond conventional ideas of authority and control. Leadership in institutions in this century can be linked to the ability to influence others, gain trust and hold shared values (Okpe, 2025). In the aspect of waqf management, leadership is important because it not only encompasses administrative responsibilities but also ethical stewardship of entrusted resources to fulfil social and religious obligations. Waqf institutions have played a significant role in developing education, healthcare and social welfare through sustainable management of charitable assets (Mahadhir et al., 2021). In higher education institutions in this century, waqf is increasingly seen as an alternative and strategic source of finance that can support institutional sustainability, especially in the face of limited government funding and increasing operating costs (Mohaiyadin et al., 2022; Usman et al., 2025).

The potential of waqf in strengthening higher education institutions is very significant, but its management effectiveness varies from one institution to another. Such variations are generally attributed to differences in governance practices, management competencies and leadership approaches adopted by the institutions. Previous studies have looked at the legal, financial and governance aspects of waqf management with limited exploration of the role of leadership, particularly in leadership styles that influence management effectiveness (Kamaruzaman & Ishak, 2023b). This issue is particularly evident in cross-country settings such as Malaysia and Southern Thailand where socio-cultural backgrounds, and institution's environments may influence leadership practices differently. This study aims to examine how leadership styles influence the effectiveness of waqf management with a specific focus on Fatoni University.

Research Problems

This study has prompted universities to seek alternative and sustainable sources of financial support such as waqf. Waqf has become a major source of support for educational development and social welfare in Islamic societies through sustainable management of charitable assets (Mahadhir et al., 2021). In higher education, waqf is increasingly seen as a strategic financial tool that can improve institutional sustainability and reduce reliance on public funding (Mohaiyadin et al., 2022; Usman et al., 2025). The effectiveness of waqf management varies between institutions. This variation is generally explained by differences in governance methods, management capacity and leadership styles adopted by the institutions.

Most previous studies on waqf management have focused on the legal framework, financial management and institutional governance practices. However, the leadership aspect, especially leadership style and its influence on the effectiveness and sustainability of waqf institutions, has not been given much attention in academic discussions (Kamaruzaman & Ishak, 2023b). This situation creates a significant knowledge gap in understanding the role of leadership on organizational performance in the context of waqf management. Leadership should not be seen solely as an administrative function but rather needs to be understood as a strategic process based on values in determining the direction of the organization, strengthening the confidence of stakeholders and ensuring that the management and use of institutional resources are implemented effectively (Okpe, 2025).

The absence of effective leadership can cause waqf institutions to face difficulties in maintaining long-term sustainability in addition to affecting the efficiency of organizational operations. Therefore, sustainable operating practices (SOPs) are increasingly seen as important factors contributing to institution's performance. Studies have shown that the implementation of SOPs can lead to increased transparency, accountability and operational efficiency, all of which are important for improving institution's performance (Mahfudz et al., 2024). However, the absence of effective leadership can cause waqf institutions to face difficulties in maintaining long-term sustainability while also affecting the operational efficiency of the organization. In this regard, sustainable operational practices are increasingly seen as an important factor that contributes to improving institutional performance. Previous studies have shown that the implementation of sustainable operational practices is able to increase transparency, accountability and operational efficiency, which in turn plays an important role in strengthening institutional performance (Mahfudz et al., 2024).

The need for sustainable operational practices is now receiving increasing attention as one of the important factors that can improve organizational performance. Previous studies have shown that the implementation of sustainable operational practices can help increase the level of transparency, accountability and operational efficiency, which in turn has a positive impact on institutional performance (Mahfudz et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of the implementation of these practices is often influenced by leadership orientation and the organizational environment as explained in contingency theory (Ujunwa & Danbeki, 2022).

Despite an increasing discussion on sustainable practices and organisational performance, empirical evidence linking leadership style, sustainable operational practices and organisational performance is still lacking, especially in the context of waqf management (Deng et al., 2023). The case shows that the relationship between these elements has not been fully studied in the existing research.

Moreover, there is a lack of studies concerning waqf institutions in the higher education sector especially in cross-country contexts such as Malaysia and Southern Thailand. Differences in socio-cultural background, institutional structure and legal environment can potentially affect leadership practices and institutional management outcomes. However, these differences of contexts are still less discussed in previous studies. These limitations make it difficult to develop a leadership model which is more sensitive to the organisational context and culture in waqf institutions.

Meanwhile, most previous studies have shown limited comprehensive understanding in the field of waqf management. Most of the studies conducted have used descriptive or quantitative methods that do not use systematic approaches such as identifying qualitative evidence. The relationship between leadership style, sustainable operational practices and organizational performance has not yet been studied in detail (Jasni et al., 2025). Therefore, this study was conducted to fill this gap by exploring the role of leadership style as a key factor in influencing sustainable operational practices and organisational performance in waqf management in higher education institutions. This study also proposes an integrated framework combining leadership style, sustainable operational practices and organisational performance to provide a more comprehensive understanding of effective and sustainable waqf management especially in the context of value-based educational institutions.

Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To investigate the association between leadership style and sustainable operational procedures (SOP) in waqf management.
- To study the effect of sustainable operating practices (SOP) on institutional performance in higher education waqf institutions.
- To explore the influence of leadership style as a determinant of institutional effectiveness.
- To discuss the role of sustainable operating practices (SOP) between leadership style and institutional performance.
- To identify the moderating influences of institutional culture, governance structure and institution's context on the connection of leadership style, SOP and performance.

Research Questions

The research questions are in line with the study objectives as follows:

- How does leadership style affect the practice of sustainable operations in the management of waqf?
- What is the relationship between sustainable operations practices (SOP) and the institutions performance of higher education institutions?
- How much does leadership style directly affect the institutions performance in waqf management?
- Do sustainable operations practices (SOP) mediate the relationship between leadership practice and institution's performance?
- How do contextual factors such as institutional culture, governance structure and institution's environment moderate the relationship between leadership style, SOP and performance?

Literature Review

The concept of leadership has evolved from an individual trait perspective to a more complex view that encompasses behaviour, environment, and relationships between leaders and followers (Bolden et al., 2023). However, earlier theories were based on innate qualities such as wisdom and charisma, but these were criticized for ignoring the context and dynamics of the

organization (Huang et al., 2022). Behavioural and contingency theories later emerged that highlighted the need for adaptability and suitability of leadership styles based on situations (Ujunwa & Danbeki, 2022). Recently we often hear about transformational and transactional leadership, namely transformational leadership is about vision, inspiration, and change, transactional leadership is about structure, control, and performance management (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Pitichat & Riggio, 2025).

Community service leadership prioritizes ethical values, empathy and community welfare which are factors in waqf management (Rahim, 2023). In the context of Islamic leadership, aspects of trust, justice and responsibility are often emphasized because leadership is not simply seen as a management function, but rather as a moral trust that must be carried out with full integrity (Mutalib et al., 2022). In waqf management practice, various leadership styles are usually adjusted according to the needs of the institution. In addition, the best leadership requires harmony between strategic vision, good governance and strong ethical principles (Koeswandana & Sugino, 2023; Ng et al., 2025).

Sustainable operational practices are an important factor in improving institutional performance, especially when institutions are faced with limited resources. The implementation of these practices will contribute to long-term sustainability through increased transparency, accountability, operational efficiency and innovation in institutional management (Mahfudz et al., 2024). Empirical studies also show that sustainable operational practices have a positive relationship with organizational performance. Therefore, the strength of the relationship depends on several other factors such as organizational culture, leadership style and the institution itself (Deng et al., 2023). In contingency theory, this theory can explain how the interaction between leadership style and organizational environment can affect the performance of an institution.

Methodology

This study adopts an integrated approach which combines systematic literature reviews, correlational meta-analysis and qualitative data support from case studies. Studies related to leadership styles, waqf management, sustainable operating practices, and institutional performance were obtained using the major databases such as Scopus and Web of Science. In this paper, only empirical studies with sufficient statistical data for correlation analysis were selected.

A staged screening process yielded a total of 26 empirical studies published between 2020 and 2025. The criteria for study selection were studies on leadership styles, sustainable operating practices, institutional performance or waqf management, used quantitative or mixed methods designs, published in indexed journals, and reported correlation values, sample sizes, or effect size indicators. Conceptual studies, articles which were not peer-reviewed and studies with insufficient statistical data were excluded from the analysis.

To assess the findings from multiple studies, this study was able to determine the strength and direction of the relationship between sustainable operating practices and organizational performance, using correlational meta-analysis. This allowed us to identify stronger patterns of relationships across institutional contexts, but with reduced variability in findings across individual studies.

To strengthen the quantitative analysis, qualitative material from a case study at Fatoni University was used to provide a deeper understanding of leadership dynamics in the local context. The quantitative and qualitative data produce a more comprehensive picture of the influence of leadership styles and sustainable operating practices on institutional performance in waqf management.

Findings and Discussion

The study findings show that the majority of the reviewed studies have shown a positive relationship between sustainable operating practices (SOPs) and institutional performance in waqf institutions. Fourteen empirical relationships were observed to have significant positive correlation thus confirming the implementation of SOPs can enhance the efficiency, accountability, transparency and sustainability of the institution. Furthermore, 12 relationships were also found to have moderating factors such as leadership style, institutional culture, governance structure and Institution's environment. The results indicate that the strength of internal institutional factors and different environmental contexts influence the relationship between SOP and institutional performance. This finding is consistent with the assumption of the Contingency Theory, which states that institutional effectiveness is determined by the fit between leadership orientation and environmental factors.

The basic contribution of this study is to explain that leadership style is not just an independent factor that affects performance but in a broader role through direct, mediating and moderating effects in the relationship between SOP and institutional performance. This finding builds upon previous discussions which have considered leadership largely in a one-dimensional manner (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The findings show that leadership in the context of waqf management is found to work through a combination of transformational, transactional and servant leadership integrated with Islamic values. This combination allows leaders to balance strategic vision, operational control, and ethical responsibility which is indeed very important in value-based Institutions such as waqf institutions (Mutalib et al., 2022; Koeswandana & Sugino, 2023).

The inclusion of moderating variables such as institutional culture, governance structure and Institutions context from a Contingency Theory perspective indicates that no one leadership style is appropriate for all Institutions. The effectiveness of leadership is largely dependent upon the degree of congruence between the internal conditions of the organization and the external factors affecting the operations of the institution. For example, institutions with strong governance and supportive institutional culture are more capable of translating SOP to better performance. On the other hand, the weaknesses of the institutions structure can reduce the effectiveness of the leadership and the implementation of SOP. This finding is consistent with previous studies that show that the quality of governance and institution's support are important factors in the effectiveness of non-profit organizations and waqf institutions (Hasan & Shauki, 2022; Ng et al., 2025).

This study also contributes to the Resource-Based View with leadership theory as a strategic resource that can enhance organizational capabilities. Capabilities such as trust building, ethical trust implementation and stakeholder relationship management are valuable, difficult to imitate and have the potential to provide sustainable competitive advantage in the waqf context. With good leadership, SOPs implementation can translate to better institutional performance, thus,

reinforcing the role of human capital and management skills as critical drivers of Institutions sustainability (Okpe, 2025).

The study also finds that trust is an important mechanism mediating between leadership and institutional performance. The confidence of stakeholders is very important in waqf institutions to ensure the continuity of resource mobilisation. Thus, it is found that the leadership styles focusing on integrity, transparency and accountability are more effective in increasing trust and Institution's legitimacy. These findings are consistent with previous studies that emphasize the importance of trust in increasing donor engagement and strengthening the position of waqf institutions in society (Nazeri et al., 2023; Hasan & Shauki, 2022). Performance of traditional Institutions is mostly measured on financial dimensions. Meanwhile, performance measurement of waqf institutions needs to be more comprehensive by including social impact, moral responsibilities and confidence of the community.

In the context of comparison between higher education institutions, especially between Malaysia and Thailand, it provides a better understanding of the impact of socio-cultural and Institutions differences on leadership practices in waqf management. The findings of this study identify that leadership in waqf management institutions relies on a flexible approach that can adapt to societal norms, legal environments and stakeholder expectations. This situation shows that effective leadership models are in the reality and diversity of institutions and do not rely on a collective leadership approach.

This study contributes several important points in strengthening the understanding of leadership dynamics in waqf management. However, there are still several areas that can be explored in more depth in the future. The use of secondary data and meta-analysis approaches certainly help in producing a more comprehensive picture of the relationships between the variables studied, but these approaches have limitations in terms of understanding institutional dynamics in a more in-depth and current way. Therefore, future studies are suggested to use primary empirical data through quantitative approaches such as Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to confirm the relationships proposed in this study. The scope of the study should also be expanded by involving more countries and various types of institutions so that the findings obtained are more comprehensive and have a better level of generalization.

The study findings also show that the effectiveness of leadership in waqf institutions cannot be assessed solely based on administrative efficiency aspects. Leadership needs to be understood in a broader dimension that includes aspects of ethics, institutional values and also the socio-cultural background of the organization. The positive relationship between sustainable operational practices and institutional performance shows that operational sustainability alone is not enough without leadership support that can build trust, strengthen stakeholder involvement and increase the organization's ability to adapt to current changes. This situation shows that leadership style is not just a management mechanism, but rather a strategic capability that determines the extent to which sustainable operational practices can be translated into institutional achievement in the long term.

Theoretical implications the findings of this study support the Contingency Theory which suggests that the effectiveness of sustainable operational practices is contingent on the influence of contextual factors such as governance quality, institutional culture and organisational environment. The findings of this study show that there is no single leadership style that can be used in all waqf institutions. Instead, the effectiveness of leadership is largely

determined by the fit between the leadership orientation and the institutional context itself. Transformational leadership and servant leadership approaches are better placed to deliver sustainable institutional performance in institutions with a strong governance structure and an organisational culture that supports institutional development.

This study also contributes to the Resource Based View by conceptualising leadership capabilities as intangible strategic resources for institutional sustainability. Trust, accountability and ethical governance are valuable institutional assets in waqf management, as they can increase stakeholders' confidence and help in resource mobilisation. This condition shows the uniqueness of waqf institutions, which cannot be assessed solely by financial achievements. But the assessment must be sensitive to the social impact, the ethical legitimacy and the degree of public trust in the institution.

This study is a significant contribution to a more comprehensive and integrated understanding of leadership dynamics in waqf management. The results of this study indicate that effective leadership is not fixed but must be flexible, context-sensitive and value-based. This study also links leadership style, sustainable operational practices and institutional performance in a holistic framework. This method not only develops theory but can also be a practical guide to improve the effectiveness and sustainability of waqf institutions in the future.

Conceptual Model

This study introduces a comprehensive conceptual framework to explain the relationship between leadership style, sustainable operating practices and institutional performance in waqf management in higher education institutions. This model is developed based on Leadership Theory, Contingency Theory and Resource-Based View (RBV) which emphasizes that leadership is an important strategic resource that influences institutional practices and overall organizational performance.

In this model, leadership style is seen as a multidimensional construct that includes transformational leadership, transactional leadership and servant leadership that incorporates Islamic leadership values. This leadership style has a direct influence on sustainable operational practices and institutional performance. Therefore, sustainable operational practices act as a mediating variable that helps translate leadership effectiveness into institutional performance achievement.

The model also includes contextual factors such as organizational culture, governance structure, and institutional environment as moderator variables to influence the strength of the relationship between leadership style, sustainable operating practices, and institutional performance. This approach suggests that the effectiveness of leadership style does not occur in a vacuum but depends on its suitability with the environment and needs of the institution itself. These factors influence the direction and strength of the relationship between SOPs, leadership style, and institutional performance. Contingency theory argues that the effectiveness of an organization depends on the degree of compatibility between the organization's internal factors and the external environment it faces.

Conceptual Framework Diagram

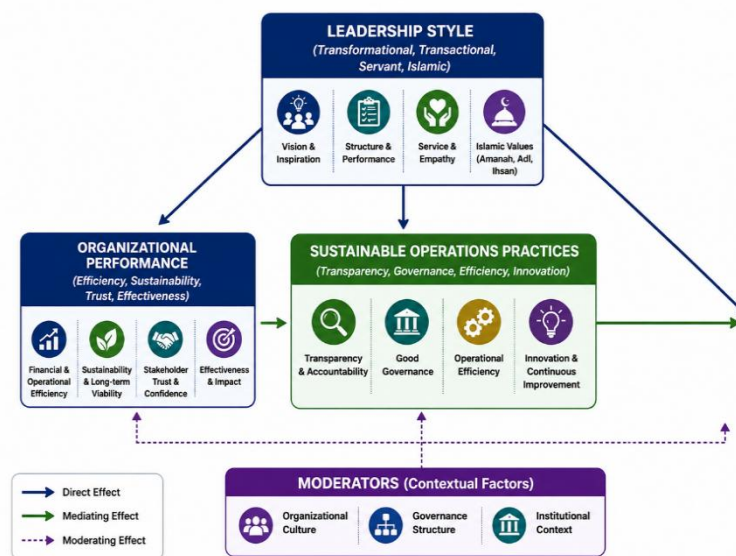


Figure 1: Diagram of Conceptual Model of Leadership Style

The proposed conceptual model indicates that leadership style significantly predicts the implementation of sustainable operating practices (SOPs) in waqf management. Islamic values as the basis for transformational, transactional and service leadership can create a work culture that emphasises transparency, accountability and innovation. These practices, in turn, help to improve institutional performance in efficiency, institution's sustainability and stakeholder confidence.

SOPs are the main mechanism through which leadership and institutional performance are linked, and in this model, SOPs are treated as an intermediate variable. Poor SOP implementation hampers the translation of leadership effectiveness to desired institutional outcomes. Therefore, the leadership approach should be consistent with the institutional operating practices in order to achieve the Institutions goals comprehensively and sustainably.

The model also includes moderating variables such as organizational culture, governance structure, and Institution's environment. These factors moderate the impact of leadership style and SOP implementation on performance. For example, a strong governance structure and supportive institutional culture will enhance the relationship between SOPs and institutional performance. On the other hand, absence of a supportive work culture or issues in the Institutions framework can hinder the effectiveness of the leadership and implementation of SOPs to generate desired results.

Conclusion

The study concludes that leadership style occupies a vital multidimensional role in determining the effectiveness of waqf management in higher education institutions. The combination of sustainable operating practices (SOPs) and adaptive, values-based leadership can improve institutional performance and further the institution's long-term sustainability. The findings of the study suggest that the leadership in waqf management is not static, but a combination of

leadership approaches is needed to address the increasing institutional demands and socio-cultural challenges. The study also highlights the role of contingency factors in shaping the relationship between SOP and institutional performance and emphasises the need for a more institutionally sensitive approach to leadership.

This study contributes to the existing literature in several ways. Theoretically, this study contributes to the understanding of waqf management by integrating leadership style, sustainable operating practices (SOPs) and Institution's performance within a broad framework based on Contingency Theory and Resource-Based Viewpoint (RBV). Unlike previous studies that have examined these variables separately, this study demonstrates that leadership is a strategic and value-based method that influences sustainability practices and determines the performance of waqf-based higher education institutions.

In addition, the current study adds to the literature on sustainability and Islamic non-profit institutions by emphasising the role of ethical leadership, quality governance and contextual factors in enhancing institutional effectiveness. The findings of this study have added a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of sustainable operating practices on financial performance as well as the level of stakeholder trust, accountability and credibility of waqf institutions.

Methodologically, this study contributes to the field of waqf management and Islamic non-profit institutions by combining a systematic literature review with a relational meta-analysis. This approach is still underused in current research, although it has the potential to produce more comprehensive research findings. The combination of quantitative integrated assessment and qualitative analysis based on this study allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the leadership dynamics and sustainability of waqf-based higher education institutions.

This study demonstrates the development of the literature by providing a more holistic analysis of leadership dynamics in waqf management. In addition, it provides practical guidance to management and policy makers who wish to improve the effectiveness of waqf institutions. Future studies are recommended to broaden the scope of research by incorporating a variety of institutions and adopting a mixed methods approach so that understanding of leadership aspects and performance in waqf management can be explored in more depth and comprehensively.

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Ethics Statement	This study was conducted in accordance with accepted academic research and publication ethics standards. As the study is based on a conceptual and literature review approach and does not involve human participants, animals, or sensitive personal data, formal ethical approval was not required. The authors confirm that all sources used in this study have been appropriately acknowledged and cited.
Author Contribution Statement	All authors contributed significantly to the development and completion of this manuscript. The first author was responsible for the conceptualization of the study, literature review, and manuscript drafting. The second author contributed to the research design, analysis, and interpretation of findings. The third author provided critical revisions, academic supervision, and final editing of the manuscript. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

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