

Strengthening Organisational Leadership through an Emotional Resilience-Based Framework for Addressing Technical Instructors' Management Competency Challenges

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ABSTRACT: *This study examines how organisational leadership can be strengthened through an emotional resilience-based framework for addressing pressure arising from technical instructors' management competency challenges within a high-performing private Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institution in Negeri Sembilan, Malaysia. Guided by an interpretivist position, the study adopted a qualitative holistic single-case design. Semi-structured interviews with eight cross-functional organisational leaders formed the primary data source and were analysed through Reflexive Thematic Analysis. Findings showed that recurring management competency challenges generated organisational pressure associated with compliance, audit readiness, institutional ratings, financial stability and operational continuity. Higher-order interpretation identified Silent Strategic Pressure, Upward Pressure Migration and Asymmetrical Accountability. Emotional resilience functioned as a foundational internal capacity supporting emotion regulation and professional judgement. This judgement informed four integrated leadership strategies: strategic communication, professional coaching, systematic monitoring and professional assertiveness. The resulting framework explains how leaders manage pressure and translate professional judgement into adaptive organisational action while supporting the maintenance of organisational performance.*

KEYWORDS- *Emotional Resilience, Emotion Regulation, Management Competency Challenges, Organisational Leadership, Professional Judgement, TVET*

I. INTRODUCTION

Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) institutions operate within increasingly demanding environments shaped by technological change, quality assurance, regulatory compliance and labour-market expectations. In Malaysia, programme implementation is supported by national occupational and accreditation standards, while private providers must maintain accreditation, institutional quality and operational continuity. Technical instructors therefore carry responsibilities extending beyond technical instruction to planning, documentation, reporting, coordination, monitoring and programme implementation.

The organisational problem examined in this study arises when technically capable instructors experience recurring difficulties in these wider management functions. Incomplete documentation, delayed reporting, weak coordination and inadequate compliance evidence may require repeated checking and corrective intervention by

leaders. Because programme delivery, audit readiness, institutional ratings, student financing and continuity are interconnected, task-level weaknesses may develop into wider organisational demands.

Existing studies have examined TVET competence, organisational pressure, emotional resilience, emotion regulation and leadership, but these areas have largely been considered separately [1]-[6]. Limited understanding therefore remains of how technical instructors' management competency challenges operate as an organisational trigger, how resulting pressure is experienced and interpreted by leaders, and how emotional resilience, emotion regulation and professional judgement inform organisational leadership strategies. This study addresses that gap by developing a contextually grounded emotional resilience-based framework for strengthening organisational leadership within a high-performing private TVET institution.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL BASIS

TVET instructor competence is multidimensional and extends beyond occupational expertise to include broader professional and management capabilities [1]. Within regulated institutions, documentation, monitoring, coordination and evidence management support quality assurance and programme continuity. When these responsibilities are performed inconsistently, the consequences may extend across interconnected organisational functions and increase the need for leadership intervention.

Organisational pressure is treated as an institutional condition rather than solely as an individual psychological state. It arises through continuing compliance, performance, operational and accountability demands. The Job Demands-Resources perspective helps explain why sustained demands require continuing cognitive and emotional effort [2]. In a private TVET setting, pressure may be amplified when leaders remain accountable for institutional outcomes while having incomplete control over the operational work from which difficulties originate.

Emotional Intelligence Theory contributes an understanding of emotional awareness and self-regulation [3]. Workplace emotional resilience explains the adaptive capacity that enables leaders to remain professionally functional under continuing pressure [4]. Emotional resilience is positioned as a foundational internal capacity rather than an outward leadership behaviour. Gross's emotion regulation framework provides a supporting process-level explanation of how immediate emotional and cognitive responses may be managed before action is taken [5]. Professional judgement then functions as the evaluative mechanism through which leaders consider institutional priorities, available information, staff circumstances, organisational risks and possible consequences.

Transformational Leadership Theory provides the principal outward leadership lens, particularly in relation to direction-setting, staff development and strengthening organisational conditions [6]. The study nevertheless does not assume that all effective responses are transformational. Leadership action may also require monitoring, structured procedures, situational adjustment and proportionate firmness. Maintenance of organisational performance refers to preserving compliance, programme continuity, audit readiness, operational functioning and institutional standards under continuing demands.

III. METHODOLOGY

The study adopted an interpretivist philosophy and a qualitative holistic single-case study design [7], [8]. One high-performing private TVET institution in Negeri Sembilan constituted the bounded case. Organisational leaders formed the unit of analysis. Eight leaders were purposively selected because they had direct responsibility for institutional operations, regulatory compliance, quality assurance, staff management, programme implementation or organisational performance.

Participants represented the Chief Executive, Accredited Centre Manager, Curriculum Manager, Student Affairs Manager, Quality System Manager, Human Resource Manager, Industry Relations/Competition/Innovation Manager and Head of Programme. Professional experience ranged from seven

to twenty-five years. Semi-structured interviews were conducted on 1-2 July 2026, face-to-face or online, and lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with consent and transcribed verbatim.

Data were analysed using Reflexive Thematic Analysis following Braun and Clarke's six recursive phases [9], [10]. Analysis was predominantly inductive while remaining theoretically sensitive to the research questions and conceptual framework. A Master Codebook, Pattern Matrix, Category Development Matrix, reflexive memoranda and coding audit trail supported analytical transparency and traceability. Trustworthiness was addressed through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability [11]. Participant codes P1-P8 protected confidentiality.

IV. FINDINGS

Five interrelated themes were developed. Theme 1 identified documentation and compliance evidence, proposal writing and non-teaching responsibilities, creativity and resource management, and general administrative procedures. Theme 2 identified rating and enrolment risks, financial and operational pressure, quality affected by time pressure, compliance and reputational pressure, and increased management workload. Theme 3 captured emotional and mental burden, unequal leadership accountability, continuous preparedness, multiple stakeholder pressure and variations in interpretation. Theme 4 identified rational and cognitive regulation, religious and spiritual practices, pausing before responding, social and organisational support, objective standards and checklists, and realistic acceptance of staff limitations. Theme 5 captured context-sensitive organisational leadership action.

Participants consistently distinguished technical competence from management competency. Technical instructors were generally regarded as capable in their technical fields, while recurring difficulties were evident in documentation, reporting, proposal preparation, coordination, resource planning and routine administration. P2 stated that documents that were not updated made JPK and internal audit processes more difficult, while P3 described personnel files being prepared only when final examinations approached. These weaknesses became organisationally significant when they generated repeated checking, correction and follow-up across several management functions.

Pressure developed through rating and enrolment risks, financial and operational demands, time-related quality concerns, compliance and reputational exposure, and increased management workload. P5 described pressure when required audit evidence could not be produced, while P6 reported that responsibilities doubled when replacement staff meeting regulatory requirements had to be identified. The findings indicated that unresolved operational responsibilities could migrate upward towards leaders who remained accountable for institutional outcomes.

Participants reported tiredness, emotional exhaustion, continuous preparedness and pressure arising from multiple stakeholders. P1 summarised the emotional burden as "Tired. Exhausted." Yet similar pressures were interpreted differently across roles: some participants regarded pressure as routine, some as a challenge and others as a motivating force.

All eight participants described forms of rational and cognitive regulation. Leaders calmed themselves, gathered information, established priorities, consulted others and referred to procedures or checklists before acting. Religious or spiritual practices, deliberate pauses and realistic acceptance of staff limitations were also reported. These practices supported continued professional functioning but did not automatically determine action. Professional judgement remained necessary to evaluate circumstances and determine a proportionate response.

The empirical leadership actions were subsequently synthesised into four integrated strategies. Strategic communication clarified expectations and coordinated responsibilities. Professional coaching supported capability development and gradual improvement. Systematic monitoring used procedures, checklists and

structured follow-up to maintain standards. Professional assertiveness represented controlled firmness when guidance and support did not produce sufficient improvement or when organisational risk increased.

V. DISCUSSION

A central higher-order finding was Silent Strategic Pressure. The institution's favourable external performance did not mean that internal pressure was absent. Leaders repeatedly absorbed corrective work, monitored incomplete responsibilities and protected compliance and programme continuity. This effort could remain largely invisible because successful intervention prevented operational weaknesses from becoming visible deterioration in formal performance outcomes.

Upward Pressure Migration explains how unresolved operational demands progressively moved towards positions carrying broader organisational responsibility. Work that was incomplete at operational level required verification, correction or completion by managers, creating cumulative pressure across functional boundaries. Asymmetrical Accountability further explains the imbalance between control and responsibility: leaders remained answerable for institutional consequences even where they had only partial direct control over the original task execution.

The findings support a differentiated but interconnected internal leadership process. Emotional resilience provided the foundational internal capacity for continued professional functioning [4]. Emotion regulation supported management of immediate emotional and cognitive responses [5], while professional judgement served as the evaluative mechanism connecting internal regulation to outward organisational action. Emotional control alone therefore did not identify the appropriate organisational response.

The four integrated leadership strategies represented outward organisational action. Their application was adaptive rather than fixed. Strategic communication and professional coaching were generally developmental, systematic monitoring strengthened implementation reliability, and professional assertiveness provided proportionate escalation when organisational interests became vulnerable. Transformational leadership remains relevant to staff development and organisational capacity [6], but the findings show that effective leadership in regulated TVET environments also requires situational monitoring and firmness.

VI. IMPLICATIONS

Private TVET institutions should distinguish technical competence from the management competencies required for programme implementation. Leadership development should address emotional resilience, emotion regulation and professional judgement alongside conventional administrative capability. Institutions may also benefit from clearer documentation systems, structured monitoring, targeted coaching and escalation mechanisms that reduce excessive dependence on senior leaders for recurring corrective work.

At the organisational level, performance assessment should consider the hidden leadership effort required to sustain favourable outcomes. Strong ratings or continued accreditation may not reveal the internal workload associated with maintaining readiness. For TVET policy and system development, greater attention to management-function capability may complement existing emphasis on technical and pedagogical competence.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study explains how recurring technical instructors' management competency challenges can develop into organisational pressure within a high-performing private TVET institution. Three higher-order findings, Silent Strategic Pressure, Upward Pressure Migration and Asymmetrical Accountability, clarify why apparently manageable operational challenges can become significant leadership concerns while favourable external performance is maintained.

The final emotional resilience-based framework positions emotional resilience as the foundational internal capacity supporting the emotion regulation process, with professional judgement providing the evaluative

mechanism through which leaders determine and adapt organisational responses. Strategic communication, professional coaching, systematic monitoring and professional assertiveness constitute the integrated outward strategies. The framework connects operational challenges, internal leadership processes and organisational action within one contextually grounded explanation of how organisational performance may be maintained under continuing pressure.

The study is limited to one bounded private TVET institution and does not seek statistical generalisation. Future research may examine the framework across different institutional settings, stakeholder groups and longitudinal conditions, and may empirically assess its application in leadership development and organisational practice.

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