The Mediating Role of Diplomatic Performances in the Relationship between Strategic Leadership, International Diplomacy, Institutional Capacity, and Foreign Policy Effectiveness: Evidence from Timor-Leste

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Abstract. The efficacy of foreign policy must be improved through strategic leadership, institutional capacity, and adaptable diplomatic practices, as small governments are confronted with complex global governance and regional geopolitical dynamics. Timor-Leste, one of the world's youngest democracies, has encountered challenges in securing its international recognition and achieving critical national interests, including membership in ASEAN. However, there is a scarcity of empirical research on the impact of organizational characteristics on the efficacy of foreign policy in minor state settings. The objective of this investigation is to examine the mediating role of Diplomatic Performance in the relationship between Strategic Leadership, International Diplomacy, Institutional Capacity, and Foreign Policy Effectiveness in Timor-Leste. This research employs a quantitative research design that incorporates Strategic Leadership Theory, Foreign Policy Analysis, Institutional Theory, and Soft Power Theory, as well as Partial Least Square Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM). Data was collected from foreign policy specialists, relevant government bodies, diplomatic missions, and officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation. The results are intended to demonstrate that Foreign Policy Effectiveness is positively influenced by Diplomatic Performance, and Strategic Leadership, International Diplomacy, and Institutional Capacity have a positive impact on Diplomatic Performance. The work makes a theoretical contribution to the literature on public sector management and foreign policy. In practice, it offers suggestions for the enhancement of institutional capacity, the cultivation of leadership, the optimization of human resources, and the integration of Timor-Leste into the regional community.

Keywords: Strategic Leadership, International Diplomacy, Institutional Capacity, Diplomatic Performance, Foreign Policy Effectiveness, Timor-Leste, PLS-SEM.

1 Introduction

The increasingly dynamic international environments have known that's fundamentally transformed the way every or each state should be formulate and implement their foreign policies. The globalisation, regional integration, technological advancement,

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geopolitical competition, transnational security threats and economic interdependence have increased the complexity of international relations, it is compelling the governments to adopt more adaptive, collaborative and strategically coordinated foreign policy approaches. In this context, the effectiveness of foreign policy is no longer measured only by the availability of material resources or military capabilities, but also by the quality of strategic leadership, institutional capacity and diplomatic performances that allow governments to respond effectively to rapidly changing global circumstances [1]. Contemporary public management literature similarly argues that public organizations must be and have to strengthen strategic leadership and organizational capabilities to improve policy implementation and organizational performances in increasingly uncertain environments [2].

As we all know that the strategic leadership has emerged as one of the most influential concepts in contemporary management studies because it enables organizations to anticipate environmental changes, formulate long-term visions, optimize organizational resources, and enhance institutional adaptability. Strategic leadership concerns future-oriented decisions, organisational change, innovation and stakeholders' engagement for sustainable organisational performances, as opposed to operational leadership. In the public sector, strategic leadership is considered a key determinant of governance effectiveness, because government leaders are expected to not only formulate strategic policies, but also to mobilise institutional resources, coordinate intergovernmental actors, and oversee policy implementation in complex bureaucratic structures [2]. Hence, the effectiveness of public organisations is increasingly dependent on the skills of leaders to combine institutional capacity, organisational learning and collaborative governance for the purpose of delivering public service.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is one of the most strategic public organisations of modern government, since it is the leading agency in charge of the design, implementation and evaluation of the foreign policy. From a public management perspective, diplomacy should not be conceived only as an external political action, but also as a strategic organisational process of planning, coordination, negotiation, communication, knowledge management and institutional collaboration. Hence, diplomatic performances are not only a competency of diplomats but also an organisational capability of government institutions to convert strategic leadership and institutional resources into successful foreign policy outcomes. This view is consistent with the rising literature that has identified diplomacy as an important element of strategic statecraft and that effective foreign policy increasingly depends on the relationship of leadership, organisational capabilities and institutional governance [1]

The need of strategic leadership is even more pronounced in the case of tiny states, given their limited economic, military and demographic resources and the need for governments to maximise diplomatic instruments in the pursuit of national interests . Small states tend to increase their influence in the international system through bilateral diplomacy, multilateral engagement, coalition building and international norm entrepreneurship instead of coercive power. Recent studies suggest that the effectiveness of small-state diplomacy depends mostly on the quality of political leadership, the credibility of institutions, and the ability of diplomatic institutions to develop strategic alliances and respond to regional and global issues [3]. Thus, diplomatic performances represent a strategic organisational asset that tiny governments might use to translate few national resources into successful foreign policy successes.

Timor-Leste provides an important empirical instance through which to study these relationships. Since achieving independence in 2002, Timor-Leste has been actively involved in a foreign policy centred on maintaining national sovereignty, promoting democratic government, drawing international investment, and enhancing bilateral and multilateral collaboration. As one of the youngest democracies in the world, Timor-Leste has chosen diplomacy as the main tool to promote its national objectives and at the same time enhance its international credibility. Small governments like Timor-Leste have been able to surmount the limitations of their low material capacities by the effective use of bilateral diplomacy, multilateral institutions and public diplomacy, which is the typical foreign policy approach of small states [3]. Further, the diplomatic development of the country has been greatly impacted by the political leadership and normative commitments that highlight peacebuilding, international cooperation and multilateralism as the basic tenets of foreign policy [4].

The membership to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is one of the most important aims of the present foreign policy of Timor-Leste. Full ASEAN membership demands not only political commitment but also significant progress in institutional capacity, bureaucratic professionalism, regulatory harmonisation and diplomatic skill. Recent studies show that enhancing public administration, civil service meritocracy and institutional preparedness have become vital for Timor-Leste's successful absorption into ASEAN and other regional governance frameworks [5]. The IX Constitutional Government of Timor-Leste has explicitly prioritised institutional development, bilateral and multilateral cooperation and the strengthening of foreign policy institutions as strategic national priorities for sustainable development and effective international engagement [6].

Nonetheless, Timor-Leste still faces severe institutional and administrative challenges that may impede the efficacy of Timor-Leste's foreign policy. In its last assessment, the United Nations noted that policy implementation and institutional performances continue to be constrained by limited institutional capacity, weak inter-sectoral coordination, governance issues and inadequate public-sector competency. These limits limit the government's capacity to translate strategic policy objectives into successful diplomatic outcomes and the organization's responsiveness to new regional and global problems. Therefore, it remains crucial to improve institutional capacity and leadership effectiveness for better public sector performance and to realise foreign policy aims [4].

These challenges indicate that from a management perspective, foreign policy effectiveness should be viewed not only as an external political outcome but as a product of the interaction of strategic leadership, institutional capacity, organisational capability, and diplomatic performance within government organisations. Previous studies have investigated strategic leadership, institutional capacity and diplomacy in isolation, but there is a dearth of empirical research that integrates these variables into a holistic organisational model, especially in the setting of developing tiny governments such as Timor-Leste. Current literature tends to focus on foreign policy from the standpoint of international relations or geopolitics and less on the role of leadership and public administration on diplomatic performances and foreign policy effectiveness. This constraint provides an essential research gap that should be empirically investigated further.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Strategic Leadership in Human Resource Management

Strategic leadership is one of the most significant concepts in contemporary Human Resource Management (HRM). It emphasises the capacity of leaders to match the vision of the business, human capital and institutional resources with long-term strategic goals. Strategic leadership, compared to operational leadership, which is concerned with the day-to-day management operations, allows organisations to predict environmental changes, develop adaptive capacities, stimulate innovation, and improve organisational effectiveness [7]. Strategic leaders in public organisations need to construct an organisational culture that supports learning, employee engagement, cooperation and ongoing capability development in an effort to build institutional resilience and improve organisational performances [2].

Strategic leadership is also crucial for Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM). Leaders affect staff competencies, organisational commitment and knowledge management methods. SHRM theory states that success in an organization depends on the degree to which organisational leadership, human capital, organisational learning, and institutional governance are integrated. Leaders who spend money on personnel development, performance management and making strategic choices are more likely to increase institutional adaptability and produce sustainable organisational performances [8]. herefore, strategic leadership is increasingly regarded as a strategic organisational capability that improves employee performance and organisational effectiveness.

Strategic leadership is more relevant in diplomatic organisations since diplomatic institutions function in extremely dynamic and uncertain international situations. Diplomatic leaders have the duty to represent national interests, cultivate competent diplomatic personnel, coordinate intergovernmental collaboration, and improve organisational capability. Hence, strategic leadership is directly contributing to the improvement of diplomatic competence and indirectly contributing to the improvement of foreign policy effectiveness through better organisational management and human resource development.

2.2 International Diplomacy as Human Capital Capability

Contemporary diplomacy is increasingly viewed as an organizational capability rather than merely an instrument of foreign policy [9]. Diplomatic institutions depend heavily on highly skilled human resources possessing competencies in negotiation, communication, intercultural understanding, policy analysis, conflict management, and strategic thinking [10]. Consequently, diplomatic effectiveness is largely determined by the quality of human capital available within ministries of foreign affairs and related government institutions.

According to the Human Capital Theory, employees are strategic assets that can create organisational value through their knowledge, skills, and professional abilities [11]. Within diplomatic organisations, investment in education, professional training, leadership development and international experience greatly contributes to the improvement of diplomatic performances. Therefore, modern HRM puts emphasis on

competency-based recruitment, continuous learning, talent management, and leadership succession as the main measures for improving diplomatic institutions [8].

For emerging countries such as Timor-Leste, diplomacy requires political commitment and experienced diplomats who are able to handle the increasingly complex international interactions. Thus human resource development has become an important component of diplomatic modernisation, particularly in preparation for regional integration and increased international collaboration.

2.3 Institutional Capacity from the HRM Perspective

Institutional capacity refers to the ability of an organization to mobilise human, financial, technological and administrative resources to successfully implement its strategic objectives. The HRM literature shows that institutional capacity is closely related to workforce capability, organisational structure, leadership quality, knowledge management and organisational culture [12]. Public policies are often better implemented by institutions with highly qualified workers, good coordination systems and adaptive organisational cultures.

According to Strategic Human Resource Management, institutional capacity cannot be isolated from human resource competence because organisational performances ultimately depend on employees' knowledge, abilities, motivation and dedication [13]. Government organisations with a continual investment in personnel development, competency enhancement, digital transformation, and performance management likely to have a higher organisational effectiveness than institutions that depend on bureaucratic procedures.

Institutional capacity in foreign affairs institutions includes competent diplomats, effective inter-ministerial coordination, evidence-based policymaking, digital diplomacy capabilities and organisational learning systems [14]. Thus, holistic HRM methods including recruiting, competency development, leadership succession, performances evaluation and organisational innovation are required to enhance institutional capability.

2.4 Diplomatic Performances

Diplomatic performances represent the effectiveness of diplomatic institutions in achieving organizational objectives through negotiation, international representation, policy coordination, and international cooperation [15]. From an HRM perspective, diplomatic performances constitute a form of organizational performances generated through the interaction between leadership quality, employee competence, institutional capacity, and organizational culture [13].

Performances management literature emphasizes that organizational performances depends on individual competencies, leadership support, organizational resources, and performances evaluation systems [16]. Therefore, diplomatic performances should not be viewed solely as an external policy outcome but rather as an organizational capability developed through effective human resource management. Diplomatic institutions that implement competency-based HRM, leadership development, and continuous professional learning are generally better equipped to achieve higher diplomatic performances.

2.5 Foreign Policy Effectiveness

Foreign policy effectiveness refers to the extent to which governments successfully achieve their national objectives through international engagement and diplomatic activities. While international relations scholars frequently explain foreign policy effectiveness using geopolitical, economic, and security perspectives, management scholars increasingly argue that effective foreign policy is equally influenced by internal organizational capability [17].

From HRM perspective, success of foreign policy is the summation of the results of strategic leadership, human resource competence, institutional capacity, organisational learning and diplomatic performances. Ministries with skilled human resources, flexible leadership, efficient organisational structures and evidence-based decision-making procedures are more likely to be able to develop and implement successful foreign policies [18]. Therefore, foreign policy efficacy must be considered as the organisational result of strategic human resource management, not just the result of external political factors [19].

2.6 Theoretical Relationship among Variables

From the perspective of Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM), strategic leadership is the main driver of organisational competence by influencing human resource development, institutional learning and organisational adaptability [20]. Institutional capacity offers the structural and administrative resources for the implementation of organisational strategies, while foreign diplomacy is the operational process by which organisational capabilities are turned into international involvement [21].

Here, diplomatic performances are a mechanism of organisational performance which links strategic leadership, international diplomacy, institutional capacity and the success of foreign policy [18]. Effective strategic leadership enhances human resource competency and institutional governance, therefore strengthening diplomatic performances and improving foreign policy effectiveness [15]. This integrated perspective enhances the existing HRM literature by relating strategic leadership and organisational competence to foreign policy results within the framework of public-sector diplomatic institutions.

3 Methodology

The research was conducted using a quantitative research approach with an explanatory research design to study the relationships between Strategic Leadership, International Diplomacy, Institutional Capacity, Diplomatic Performances and Foreign Policy Effectiveness in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste. Primary data were acquired through a cross-sectional survey of personnel who were directly involved in the conduct of diplomatic relations and the implementation of foreign policy.

The study population consisted of civil workers and diplomats working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste. Respondents were purposively selected based on their participation in policy making, diplomatic operations

and institutional administration. Data was acquired by using a standardised questionnaire on 5-point Likert scale from 1(Strongly Disagree) to 5(Strongly Agree). The measurement items for each construct were modified from existing studies in the fields of strategic leadership, human resource management, public administration and international relations.

Data were analysed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) using Smart-PLS software. The study was performed in two parts, the first stage was the assessment of the measurement model (outer model) which included reliability and validity tests, and the second stage was the structural model (inner model) evaluation to test the proposed hypotheses. The mediating influence of Diplomatic Performances was examined by bootstrapping approach at 5% significance level.

The choice of this methodological technique was because PLS-SEM is suitable for the investigation of complex interactions between many latent variables, the assessment of mediation effects, and the provision of robust predictive analysis in organisational and management research.

4 Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Results

A total of 15 respondents participated in this pilot survey. The questionnaire was designed to measure five constructs, namely Strategic Leadership, International Diplomacy, Institutional Capacity, Diplomatic Performances, and Foreign Policy Effectiveness within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

Overall, the descriptive results indicate that respondents expressed positive perceptions toward most aspects of leadership, institutional capacity, diplomatic performances, and foreign policy effectiveness. The majority of item means were above 4.00, indicating that respondents generally agreed that the Ministry demonstrates effective leadership, competent diplomatic performances, and successful implementation of foreign policy.

Strategic Leadership. The findings indicate that Strategic Leadership is generally perceived positively by employees. Respondents agreed that senior leaders communicate a clear strategic vision (Mean = 4.00), encourage strategic thinking (Mean = 4.27), make decisions based on long-term organizational goals (Mean = 4.33), encourage innovation (Mean = 4.13), support employee professional development (Mean = 4.13), and empower employees in decision-making processes (Mean = 4.33). However, one leadership dimension received comparatively lower evaluations. The statement regarding leaders effectively managing organizational change obtained the lowest mean score (2.89–3.00), indicating that respondents were less satisfied with change management practices than with other leadership behaviors. Thus, respondents were less satisfied with change management practices as compared to other leadership behaviours. The findings indicate that leadership is typically seen positively, although organisational transformation and change management need more development. Public organization

executives need to lead people through organisational transitions while maintaining motivation and performance, as policy reforms, institutional restructuring and changing diplomatic agendas, require effective change management.

Institutional Capacity. The results also demonstrate relatively positive perceptions regarding Institutional Capacity. Respondents agreed that the Ministry has effective organizational procedures (Mean = 4.40), provides adequate professional training (Mean = 4.20), maintains effective internal coordination (Mean = 4.00), and possesses competent employees (Mean = 3.75). Information systems supporting organizational performances received a slightly lower evaluation (Mean = 3.75), while institutional resources and resource allocation recorded mean scores of 3.87. The findings show that the respondents think that the Ministry has a fairly good institutional base to facilitate diplomatic activities. Yet, the effectiveness of organisations can be enhanced by better digital technologies, resource management and institutional support.

Diplomatic Performances. Favourable perceptions of Diplomatic Performances were reported by respondents. Diplomatic negotiations were assessed to be usually successful (Mean = 4.27), diplomatic staff were perceived to be acting professionally (Mean = 4.27), and the Ministry was perceived to be managing international alliances successfully (Mean = 4.40). Furthermore, the diplomatic activities were assessed to strengthen the international image of Timor-Leste (Mean = 4.47), and diplomatic missions were perceived to have a favourable impact on national development (Mean = 4.33). Yet the implementation of international agreements had a slightly lower mean (Mean = 3.64) than other indices of diplomatic performance. This finding indicates that respondents experience more difficulties during the implementation than during negotiation or representation. These findings are not surprising considering that implementation of international accords usually involves coordination across several government agencies, adequate institutional capability, financial resources and long-term policy commitment.

Foreign Policy Effectiveness. The top rated construct was Foreign Policy Effectiveness. The respondents agreed that Timor-Leste’s foreign policy develops bilateral ties (Mean = 4.00), strengthens multilateral cooperation (Mean = 4.00), strengthens ASEAN integration (Mean = 4.00), contributes to economic development (Mean = 4.00), and safeguards national interests (Mean = 4.00).
The strongest evaluations were observed for foreign policy contributing to regional peace and stability (Mean = 4.53) and enhancing Timor-Leste's international reputation (Mean = 4.47). Overall, respondents agreed that Timor-Leste's foreign policy is effective (Mean = 4.20).These findings indicate that employees perceive the Ministry as successfully implementing foreign policy objectives while strengthening Timor-Leste's position within regional and international affairs. Such perceptions are particularly relevant considering Timor-Leste's expanding diplomatic engagement within ASEAN and other multilateral institutions

4.2 General Discussion

The findings of this pilot study provide important preliminary evidence regarding the relationship between Strategic Leadership, International Diplomacy, Institutional

Capacity, Diplomatic Performances, and Foreign Policy Effectiveness within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste. Overall, the respondents have good perceptions in all five dimensions, indicating that the Ministry has a relatively sound organisational base to support the implementation of foreign policy. From the point of view of Public Sector Management, these findings have implications for the successful implementation of foreign policy, which depends not only on external diplomatic engagement but also on internal organisational capabilities, including the quality of leadership, institutional capacity and the performances of diplomatic personnel.

The findings reveal that Strategic Leadership is one of the most important organisational resources in the Ministry. In general, the respondents agreed that the senior leaders express a clear strategic vision, stimulate strategic thinking, engage employees in decision making and foster innovation and professional growth. The results show that leadership in the Ministry is not simply about administrative oversight but it is about developing an organisational climate that encourages employee engagement, teamwork and continual learning. Strategic leadership is a mechanism to align human resources to organisational objectives from a Human Resource Management (HRM) perspective. When leaders communicate strategic priorities well, personnel are able to grasp how they may contribute to Timor-Leste's overall diplomatic mission. Thus, leadership has an impact not only on the behaviour of employees but also boosts the dedication and performance of the organization.

However, despite the positive views, the results of the poll also revealed that organisational change management was evaluated somewhat lower than other characteristics of leadership. The result shows that respondents believe that organisational change is an issue that requires more attention from managers. The ministries of foreign affairs function in a very dynamic international context marked by geopolitical change, rising regional cooperation, technological innovation and growing complexity of diplomacy. Therefore, leaders should have strategic vision and be able to lead personnel to institutional reforms, organisational restructuring and policy adaption. Thus, by improving change management methods with transparent communication, employee involvement, and leadership coaching, organisational resilience and long-term performances can be improved.

The results also indicate that the institutional capacity is typically considered as adequate to support diplomatic missions. Respondents recognised the presence of human resources, organisational procedures and professional training enabling diplomatic activity. But substantially lower scores regarding to information systems and resource management it's requires that institutional support mechanisms still need development. The institutional capacity of public administration is made up of organisational structures, administrative procedures, governance systems, technology infrastructure and human resource capabilities. Through these organisational tools, ministries are able to establish policies, coordinate diplomatic initiatives, monitor international partnerships and implement government agendas efficiently. Therefore, enhancing institutional capacity should continue to be a strategic goal for enhancing organisational performances and policy implementation.

Survey results also reveal positive perceptions of International Diplomacy. Respondents typically agree that diplomatic communication, bilateral cooperation, multilateral participation and international discussions are conducted effectively. These findings indicate that employees view diplomacy as a professional organisational

competence, grounded in competent diplomatic personnel, rather than political engagement between governments. Public Sector Management's foreign diplomacy demands the synthesis of technical expertise, intercultural communication, negotiation skills, strategic planning and organisational coordination. Effective diplomacy is therefore a matter of human abilities and institutional support mechanisms. The favourable perceptions identified in this study suggest that the Ministry has developed organisational capacities that allow it to work constructively with external partners while promoting Timor-Leste's national interests.

With regard to Diplomatic Performances, respondents expressed confidence in the Ministry's ability to execute diplomatic responsibilities effectively. High ratings were observed for diplomatic negotiation, international representation, stakeholders' management, and contributions to the country's international reputation. These findings indicate that employees perceive diplomatic performances as reflecting the collective effectiveness of leadership, institutional resources, and employee competencies. Nevertheless, the implementation of international agreements received comparatively lower evaluations than other performances indicators. This finding highlights the distinction between successful negotiation and successful implementation. While diplomatic negotiations may produce favourable agreements, achieving tangible outcomes often requires strong intergovernmental coordination, administrative capacity, financial resources, monitoring mechanisms, and sustained political commitment. Consequently, strengthening implementation capacity should become an important managerial priority to maximize the long-term benefits of international cooperation.

Among all variables examined, Foreign Policy Effectiveness received the highest overall evaluations. Respondents agreed that Timor-Leste's foreign policy has strengthened bilateral and multilateral cooperation, enhanced regional integration, protected national interests, improved international reputation, and contributed to regional peace and stability. These findings suggest that employees perceive the Ministry as successfully translating diplomatic activities into strategic national outcomes. From the perspective of international relations, effective foreign policy reflects a country's ability to align diplomatic actions with national priorities while responding to changes in the international environment. From the perspective of Public Sector Management, however, foreign policy effectiveness is also an organizational outcome that depends upon leadership quality, institutional capacity, employee competence, and organizational performances. The present findings therefore reinforce the argument that successful diplomacy is supported not only by external political strategies but also by effective internal organizational management.

Taken together, the results of this study corroborate the suggested conceptual framework that puts Diplomatic Performances as a mediating organisational competency that links leadership, diplomacy, and institutional capacity to foreign policy effectiveness. Although causal relationships cannot be confirmed yet due to the descriptive analysis from a limited pilot sample, the observed response patterns suggest that improvements in leadership quality, institutional capability, and diplomatic competencies are associated with stronger perceptions of organisational performances and policy effectiveness. These initial findings provide empirical evidence to the theoretical premise that organisational resources and managerial capabilities are major drivers of successful foreign policy execution.

In practical terms, the findings suggest that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste should continue to invest in leadership development, competency-based human resource management, organisational learning, and institutional strengthening. Special attention should be paid to more effective management of organisational change, improved digital administrative systems, enhanced knowledge management and better inter-agency collaboration in the implementation of international agreements. These reforms are projected to improve diplomatic performances and raise the effectiveness of Timor-Leste's foreign policy in an increasingly complicated regional and global environment.

Finally, the results of this pilot study should be treated with caution as the survey included just 15 respondents. Thus, the findings cannot be generalised to the larger population of employees inside the Ministry at this time. The main contribution of this study is to provide preliminary empirical evidence to validate the suggested conceptual framework and the practicality of the research instrument . Future research must use a significantly larger sample and utilise Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) to explore the direct and indirect associations among the variables, evaluate the mediating effect of Diplomatic Performances, and offer robust empirical support for theory advancement in Public Sector Management, particularly at the confluence of Human Resource Management, Public Administration, and International Relations.

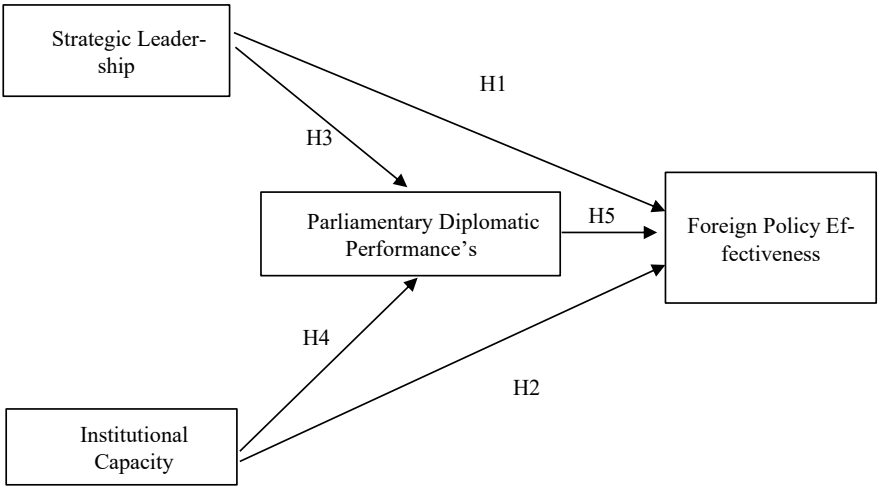


Fig. 1 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework proposes that Strategic Leadership, International Diplomacy, and Institutional Capacity are key organizational factors influencing Foreign Policy Effectiveness within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste. These three independent variables are expected to have both direct effects on foreign policy effectiveness and indirect effects through Diplomatic Performances as the mediating variable.

Strategic Leadership provides strategic direction, motivates employees, and strengthens organizational performances. International Diplomacy enhances the Ministry's ability to build international cooperation, conduct negotiations, and represent national interests. Institutional Capacity supports diplomatic activities through competent human resources, effective governance, and efficient organizational systems. Together, these factors improve Diplomatic Performances, which ultimately contributes to more effective implementation of Timor-Leste's foreign policy. Therefore, the framework suggests that stronger organizational capabilities lead to higher diplomatic performances and greater foreign policy effectiveness.

5 Conclusion

This study examined the role of Diplomatic Performances in mediating the relationship between Strategic Leadership, International Diplomacy, Institutional Capacity, and Foreign Policy Effectiveness within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Timor-Leste. Based on the descriptive findings of the pilot survey, respondents generally demonstrated positive perceptions across all research constructs, indicating that the Ministry possesses a relatively strong organizational foundation to support the implementation of Timor-Leste's foreign policy objectives.

The findings reveal that Strategic Leadership is perceived as an important organizational capability that contributes to employee development, strategic direction, organizational innovation, and effective decision-making. Respondents acknowledged that leaders successfully communicate organizational goals and encourage employee participation in achieving institutional objectives. However, organizational change management received comparatively lower evaluations than other leadership dimensions, suggesting that although strategic leadership has been implemented effectively, greater attention should be devoted to strengthening leadership capabilities in managing organizational transformation and adapting to rapidly changing diplomatic environments.

The study also concludes that Institutional Capacity constitutes a critical organizational resource supporting diplomatic activities. Respondents perceived that competent human resources, effective organizational procedures, professional training, and institutional coordination positively contribute to organizational performances. Nevertheless, several institutional components, particularly information systems, resource management, and administrative support mechanisms, require continuous improvement to enhance the organizational responsiveness and policy implementation. These findings emphasize that effective diplomacy depends not only on individual competencies but also on the strength of institutional systems that facilitate coordination, knowledge sharing, and organizational learning.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that International Diplomacy is perceived as an essential organizational capability that strengthens Timor-Leste's engagement with bilateral and multilateral partners. Respondents recognized the Ministry's ability to conduct diplomatic communication, negotiation, and international cooperation effectively. These findings has also provided the opinion and suggestion that diplomatic competence extends beyond external political interaction and should be understood as a strategic organizational capability developed through professional of a human resource management, continuously of capacity building, and institutional support. Consequently, strengthening diplomatic competencies among public servants remains fundamental for improving the Ministry's overall organizational performances.

Regarding Diplomatic Performances, respondents generally perceived diplomatic personnel to perform their responsibilities effectively through successful negotiation, professional international representation, constructive stakeholders' engagement, and contributions to Timor-Leste's international reputation. Nevertheless, the implementation of international agreements was considered and identified as a relatively weaker aspect compared with negotiation and diplomatic representation. This finding indicates that achieving of diplomatic agreements alone is insufficient to guarantee the success of the policy unless supported by effective implementation mechanisms, inter-agency coordination, adequate institutional resources, and sustained organizational commitment. Therefore, improving implementation capacity represents an important managerial priority for maximizing the impact of diplomatic initiatives.

Among all research variables, Foreign Policy Effectiveness received the highest overall evaluations. Respondents believed that the Ministry has effectively strengthened bilateral and multilateral cooperation, supported Timor-Leste's regional integration efforts, enhanced the country's international reputation, protected national interests, and contributed to regional peace and stability. These findings demonstrate that employees perceive foreign policy outcomes as reflecting the combined influence of effective leadership, institutional capacity, diplomatic competence, and organizational performances. In this respect, foreign policy effectiveness should be viewed not merely as a diplomatic achievement but also as the result of effective public sector management practices that integrate leadership, human resource development, organizational capacity, and institutional governance.

Overall, this study supports the theoretical proposition that the successful of foreign policy implementation requires an integrated organizational approach in which strategic leadership, institutional capacity, and diplomatic capability collectively strengthen diplomatic performances and ultimately improve foreign policy effectiveness. Although the today's study is relied on descriptive analysis because of the limited number of respondents, the findings provide preliminary empirical support for the proposed conceptual framework and demonstrate the relevance of integrating Human Resource Management, Public Administration, and International Relations within the broader perspective of Public Sector Management. This interdisciplinary perspective offers a more comprehensive understanding of how internal organizational capabilities influence external diplomatic outcomes.

Finally, because this research represents as a pilot study by involving a limited number of respondents, the findings should be interpreted cautiously and cannot yet be generalized to the broader population. Future research involving a larger sample and employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) is

recommended to validate the proposed measurement model, examine the mediating role of Diplomatic Performances empirically, and provide stronger evidence regarding the causal relationships among Strategic Leadership, International Diplomacy, Institutional Capacity, Diplomatic Performances, and Foreign Policy Effectiveness within the public sector.

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