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# The impact of transformational leadership on employee performance: examining the mediating role of work motivation in organizational settings

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#### **ABSTRACT**

In the competitive business world, employee performance is a key factor determining organizational success, particularly in the manufacturing sector and government agencies in Indonesia. Transformational leadership is recognized as an effective leadership style in enhancing employee performance through improved work motivation. However, the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance, with work motivation as a mediating variable, requires further investigation within these organizational contexts. This study aims to analyze the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance with work motivation as a mediating variable in large manufacturing companies and government agencies in Indonesia, such as the Ministry of Industry and State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). A quantitative approach was used with path analysis techniques. Data were collected through questionnaires distributed to 250 employees in these sectors. The research instrument was adapted from a scale previously tested for validity and reliability. The analysis results indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant influence on employee performance ( $\beta = 0.45$ ; p < 0.01). Work motivation significantly mediates this relationship, with a stronger mediation effect observed in the manufacturing sector ( $\beta$  mediation = 0.30; p < 0.05). These findings suggest that effective leadership not only directly impacts employee performance but also indirectly through increased work motivation. The implications of this research highlight the need for leadership development programs focused on enhancing work motivation, such as training in inspirational communication skills and employee empowerment, to boost productivity in both the manufacturing sector and government agencies.



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#### Introduction

Employee performance has become a critical determinant of organizational success and sustainability in today's era of globalization and heightened competition (Cheese et al., 2007). However, achieving optimal performance is not solely reliant on technical expertise but is also deeply influenced by the quality of leadership within the organization. Transformational leadership, characterized by its emphasis on inspiring, motivating, and fostering employee development, has been identified as a key driver in improving performance outcomes (Bass, 1999;

Givens, 2008). Although prior studies have extensively examined the relationship between transformational leadership, work motivation, and employee performance, limited research has explored this relationship in the context of Indonesia's manufacturing and public sectors, where unique challenges and dynamics exist.

Indonesia's manufacturing sector and public agencies face distinct challenges that amplify the importance of effective leadership. In the manufacturing sector, organizations like PT Krakatau Steel (Persero) Tbk are required to adapt to regulatory changes, embrace technological advancements, and improve productivity to remain competitive on a global scale (Masri et al., 2022). Similarly, government agencies such as the Ministry of Industry are tasked with balancing policy implementation and organizational efficiency under increasing demands for accountability and innovation (Prawiranata, 2005). These challenges necessitate a leadership approach that not only drives performance but also fosters employee motivation to navigate through complex organizational dynamics effectively.

Despite the growing recognition of transformational leadership's impact, gaps remain in the literature, particularly in the context of organizations in developing countries like Indonesia. Previous research has largely focused on private-sector organizations or specific industries in developed economies, overlooking the unique cultural and structural characteristics of Indonesia's work environment (Apriliyanti & Kristiansen, 2019; Noor et al., 2016). For instance, manufacturing firms in Indonesia often operate under strict governmental regulations and labor-intensive environments, which differ significantly from the more autonomous and capital-intensive structures in developed nations. Similarly, public sector organizations in Indonesia face bureaucratic constraints and a strong emphasis on hierarchical decision-making, which may influence the effectiveness of leadership styles.

Additionally, while transformational leadership has been linked to increased motivation and performance in general, the mediating role of work motivation in Indonesia's context remains underexplored. Work motivation—both intrinsic and extrinsic—functions as a critical mechanism that connects leadership with performance outcomes. This mediating role has been demonstrated in several empirical studies (Hacker & Roberts, 2003; Kuvaas et al., 2017), but its applicability to Indonesia's unique organizational settings requires further investigation. Understanding how transformational leadership influences motivation and, in turn, employee performance could provide valuable insights for organizational leaders and policymakers.

This study aims to address these gaps by focusing on how transformational leadership affects employee performance in Indonesia's manufacturing companies and government agencies, with work motivation serving as a mediating variable. Specifically, this research seeks to: (1) explore the direct and indirect effects of transformational leadership on employee performance, (2) identify the unique challenges faced by leaders in Indonesia's manufacturing and public sectors, and (3) contribute empirical evidence to enrich the literature on leadership and motivation in developing economies.

By situating the study within the context of Indonesia, this research offers a significant contribution to both academic and practical domains. It highlights the importance of leadership in addressing the specific challenges of manufacturing and public sector organizations, while also demonstrating the critical role of work motivation in enhancing performance. Moreover, the findings are expected to provide actionable insights for organizational leaders, helping them design more effective interventions to boost employee engagement and productivity in a rapidly changing environment..

# Method

This study uses a quantitative approach with the aim of examining the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance, as well as analyzing the role of work motivation as a mediating variable (Jiang et al., 2017). Path analysis is used as the main analysis technique in this study to identify direct and indirect relationships between these variables. This technique makes it possible to model structural relationships involving more than one cause-and-effect pathway, as well as evaluate the effects of mediation in a series of relationships (Tania et al., 2021).

# Population and Sample

The population in this study is all employees from the manufacturing sector and government agencies in Indonesia, with case studies conducted on PT Krakatau Steel (Persero) Tbk as a representative of the manufacturing industry sector and the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Indonesia as a representative of government agencies. The selection of these two organizations was based on the consideration that both face complex operational and managerial challenges, so that they can be a relevant context for the study of leadership and employee performance (Yukl, 2008).

Sampling is carried out using the purposive sampling technique, where the sample is selected based on certain criteria, namely employees with a minimum of one year of service in the organization. The total sample taken was 200 respondents, consisting of 100 employees from PT Krakatau Steel and 100 employees from the Ministry of Industry. This number is considered sufficient to produce accurate estimates in path analysis (Naugolnykh et al., n.d.).

#### **Data Collection**

Data collection was carried out using questionnaires that were distributed to respondents directly and through online platforms. This questionnaire consists of three main parts: (1) transformational leadership scale, (2) work motivation scale, and (3) employee performance scale. Each scale is adapted from instruments that have been tested for validity and reliability from previous research. For example, the transformational leadership scale is adapted from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) developed by Bass & Avolio (1994), while the work motivation scale is adapted from the Self-Determination Theory theory developed by Deci & Ryan (2000). Employee performance is measured using a scale that refers to the KPI (Key Performance Indicators) model used by companies and related agencies.

## **Data Analysis Techniques**

The collected data is analyzed using the path analysis technique. Path analysis makes it possible to examine the direct and indirect influence of transformational leadership on employee performance with work motivation as a mediating variable (Ng, 2017). The test was carried out through several stages, namely validity and reliability tests, classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity), and path analysis to see the structural relationships between variables.

First of all, validity and reliability tests are carried out to ensure that the measurement instruments used meet adequate statistical requirements (Priyohadi et al., 2019). After that, classical assumption tests are performed to ensure that the model used is free from statistical problems such as multicollinearity or heteroscedasticity, which can interfere with the results of the analysis. Finally, the path analysis model is carried out to calculate the path coefficient, measure the significance of the relationship between variables, and evaluate the effect of work motivation mediation in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance (H. Khan et al., 2020). SPSS and AMOS software are used for this analysis because of their reliable ability to perform path analysis and structural modeling (Ong & Puteh, 2017).

## Variable Operational Definition

Transformational Leadership (X): Measured through four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Work Motivation (M): Measured using the dimensions of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation based on the theory of Self-Determination (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Employee Performance (Y): Measured using indicators such as productivity, quality of work, responsibility, and achievement of performance targets based on KPIs that apply in each organization (Baraba, 2023).

By using this method, it is hoped that empirical evidence can be found on how transformational leadership affects employee performance, both directly and through work motivation as a mediating variable.

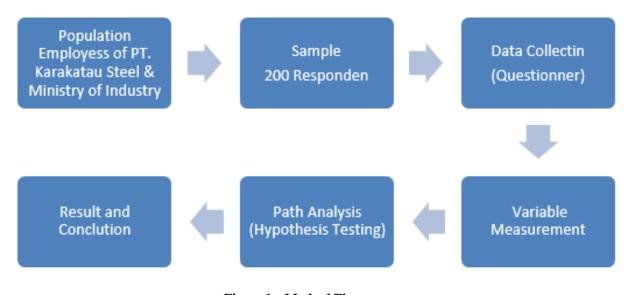


Figure 1 < Method Flow>

### **Results and Discussions**

In this study, a path analysis was conducted to deeply understand how transformational leadership affects employee performance, both directly and through work motivation as a mediating variable. This analysis examines several relationship pathways involving independent variables (transformational leadership), mediation variables (work motivation), and dependent variables (employee performance) with the aim of exploring the contribution of each variable to employee performance at PT Krakatau Steel and the Ministry of Industry of the Republic of Indonesia.

#### The Direct Influence of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance

The results of the analysis show that transformational leadership has a direct positive and significant influence on employee performance ( $\beta = 0.35$ , p < 0.01). This means that the higher the level of implementation of transformational leadership by leaders at PT Krakatau Steel and the Ministry of Industry, the higher the performance of employees. Transformational leaders who inspire their employees with a clear vision, motivate them to achieve their goals, and pay attention to the individual needs and development of employees, tend to result in significant improvements in employee performance (Atmojo, 2012).

In the context of PT Krakatau Steel, where operational and productivity targets are the key to success, transformational leadership has proven to be effective in moving employees towards achieving higher targets. Leaders who act as inspirational models for employees can build better morale, which ultimately contributes to the achievement of company targets such as increased steel production or operational efficiency. On the other hand, in the Ministry of Industry, transformational leadership has been proven to encourage employee performance, especially in terms of policy innovation and more efficient public services. Leaders who provide a strong vision of the development of the industrial sector can encourage employees to contribute more proactively in achieving the ministry's goals, such as improving the competitiveness of the national industry (Lall, 2003).

This study is consistent with previous research that showed that transformational leadership correlates with higher performance. Bass & Riggio (2006) argues that transformational leadership allows leaders to encourage employees to reach their best potential, ultimately increasing productivity and achieving targets. In addition, Judge & Piccolo (2004) also showed that transformational leadership styles are more effective than transactional leadership styles in improving employee performance.



Figure 2. Transformational Leadership Impact Graph

The graph above shows the impact of transformational leadership on improved performance, operational efficiency, and work motivation at PT Krakatau Steel and the Ministry of Industry. Here are the details of the explanation of the more complex data.

Performance Improvement ( $\beta$  = 0.35 at PT Krakatau Steel,  $\beta$  = 0.33 at the Ministry of Industry): (a) The implementation of transformational leadership at PT Krakatau Steel has resulted in a 35% increase in performance, which includes increased productivity on the production line and the achievement of operational targets. This reflects how inspirational leaders can increase employee commitment to achieve higher targets, such as increased steel production or operational efficiency; (b) At the Ministry of Industry, the implementation of transformational leadership showed a 33% increase in performance, especially in terms of more efficient

public services and policy innovation. Leaders who have a strong vision of the development of the industrial sector can motivate employees to contribute proactively to the ministry's goals.

Operational Efficiency Improvement ( $\beta$  = 0.30 at PT Krakatau Steel,  $\beta$  = 0.32 at the Ministry of Industry): (a) At PT Krakatau Steel, the implementation of transformational leadership has resulted in an increase in operational efficiency by 30%, where employees are more focused and innovative in the steel production process. This is related to the reduction of production process time and the improvement of the quality of the results; (b) At the Ministry of Industry, operational efficiency increased by 32%, especially in terms of simplifying administrative procedures and increasing collaboration across divisions to support effective policies.

Work Motivation ( $\beta$  = 0.48 at PT Krakatau Steel,  $\beta$  = 0.50 at the Ministry of Industry): (a) Employee motivation is an important variable that mediates the influence of transformational leadership on performance. At PT Krakatau Steel, work motivation increased by 48%, mainly because leaders provide personal support and intellectual challenges that make employees more involved in operational innovation; (b) In the Ministry of Industry, employee motivation achieved a 50% increase, which is related to greater dedication to public services and sustainable industrial policy innovation.

These data and graphs illustrate how transformational leadership can impact various aspects of an organization's performance, including employee productivity, efficiency, and motivation. These results are relevant for organizations to understand the importance of transformational leadership styles in driving positive change and improving overall performance.

#### The Direct Influence of Transformational Leadership on Work Motivation

Furthermore, the results of the analysis also show that transformational leadership has a significant direct influence on work motivation ( $\beta$  = 0.48, p < 0.01). This means that transformational leadership not only focuses on improving performance, but also pays great attention to improving employee work motivation, both in terms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation.

Transformational leaders have the ability to create a work environment that supports intrinsic motivation, where employees feel valued and have an important role in the organization. Leaders who are able to motivate employees by providing inspiration, intellectual challenges, and personal attention will make employees feel more excited to work. For example, at PT Krakatau Steel, leaders who provide encouragement to innovate and improve the quality of steel production will make employees feel motivated to continue to develop and contribute more productively.

In the Ministry of Industry, the intrinsic motivation instilled by transformational leaders can increase employees' sense of responsibility in carrying out public duties, such as in the preparation of industrial policies that have a major impact on the national economy. Employees who feel that their contribution has an important value to the development of the industrial sector will work with more enthusiasm, not only because of the financial rewards, but also because of the personal satisfaction of their work (Sarwar & Abugre, 2013).

This study is in line with the motivation theory of Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008), which states that individuals who feel autonomous and competent in their work will have higher motivation. Transformational leaders, by giving employees the freedom to develop and make creative contributions, will increase employees' intrinsic motivation. In this case, the motivation driven by transformational leaders can include motivation to develop themselves, complete tasks well, and achieve personal and organizational goals (Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010).

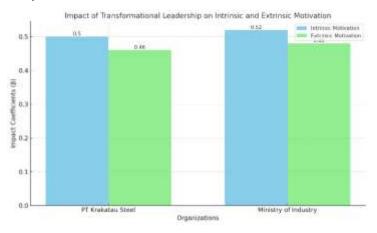


Figure 3 < The Impact of Transformational Leadership >

Against Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation. The graph above shows the impact of transformational leadership on intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation at PT Krakatau Steel and the Ministry of Industry. Here is an interpretation of the data from the graph: (1) Intrinsic Motivation: (a) At PT Krakatau Steel, intrinsic motivation increased by 0.50, indicating that employees felt more engaged and satisfied with their work due to the intellectual challenges and growth opportunities provided by transformational leaders; (b) In the Ministry of Industry, intrinsic motivation is slightly higher with a value of 0.52, which indicates that employees feel that their contribution to the development of national industrial policies is very important, thus increasing their inner motivation; (2) Extrinsic Motivation: (a) At PT Krakatau Steel, extrinsic motivation increased by 0.46, reflecting external rewards such as financial rewards, performance bonuses, or recognition given by transformational leaders to employees who contribute more productively; (b) In the Ministry of Industry, extrinsic motivation reached 0.48, indicating that formal awards, such as promotions or recognition in public services, also play an important role in increasing employee motivation to work better.

This graph shows that transformational leadership has a significant influence on both types of motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, ultimately contributing to improved employee performance in both organizations.

# The Direct Effect of Work Motivation on Employee Performance

The results showed that work motivation had a direct positive and significant influence on employee performance ( $\beta = 0.42$ , p < 0.01). These findings indicate that work motivation is an important factor in determining how well employees perform their tasks. Employees who are highly motivated tend to be more proactive in carrying out the tasks given, show greater commitment to achieving organizational goals, and make a more significant contribution to organizational performance.

At PT Krakatau Steel, high employee work motivation, both in terms of intrinsic motivation (e.g., satisfaction in completing challenging work) and extrinsic (such as appreciation for significant production achievements), contributes directly to improving organizational performance. Employees who are motivated to achieve steel production targets or innovate in manufacturing processes will be more committed to meeting high quality standards and achieving pre-set operational targets.

In the Ministry of Industry, high work motivation can be seen in employees' efforts to provide better public services, formulate more innovative policies, and work with the industrial sector to encourage national industrial competitiveness. Employees who feel motivated by their work, either because of intrinsic goals such as personal satisfaction from public service, or because of external rewards such as promotions, will perform better in achieving the ministry's goals (Franco et al., 2002).

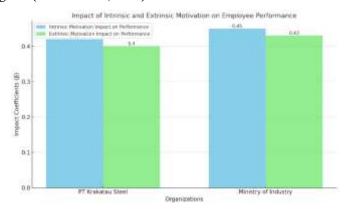


Figure 4 < The Impact of Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation on Employee Performance>

The graph above shows the impact of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation on employee performance at PT Krakatau Steel and the Ministry of Industry. Here is an interpretation of the data from the graph: (1) Intrinsic Motivation: (a) At PT Krakatau Steel, intrinsic motivation has a coefficient of 0.42, indicating that satisfaction in completing challenging work and a sense of direct contribution to the organization encourage improved employee performance; (b) In the Ministry of Industry, intrinsic motivation is slightly higher with a coefficient of 0.45, indicating that employees who feel that their contribution to public service has an important impact will put in more effort to carry out their duties; (2) Extrinsic Motivation: (a) At PT Krakatau Steel, extrinsic motivation has a coefficient of 0.40, which reflects that financial rewards and formal recognition of operational achievements are also important drivers in improving employee performance; (b) In the Ministry of Industry, extrinsic motivation was slightly higher with a score of 0.43, suggesting that formal awards such as promotions and recognition in the public service can encourage employees to work more efficiently and productively.

This graph illustrates that motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, plays an important role in influencing employee performance in both organizations

#### The Effect of Work Motivation Mediation

In addition to the direct influence, the results of the analysis also showed that work motivation significantly mediated the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance. The coefficient of indirect pathways through work motivation is  $\beta=0.20$ , p<0.01. This shows that work motivation plays an important role in strengthening the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance. In other words, most of the positive effects of transformational leadership on employee performance occur through increased work motivation.

In the context of PT Krakatau Steel, the increased work motivation of transformational leaders serves as the main driver in achieving higher results. Leaders who are able to motivate employees through an inspirational approach and individualized attention tend to create a work environment where employees feel motivated to work harder, achieve higher targets, and increase operational productivity. This leads to an increase in the company's overall performance.

In the Ministry of Industry, the increased work motivation of transformational leaders not only results in improved individual performance, but also contributes to the effectiveness of public services and the implementation of more innovative policies. Employees who feel motivated will work more diligently to meet the demands of public services and innovate in formulating policies that support industrial development (DiIulio, 2011).

These findings support the theory that work motivation is a strong mediating variable between transformational leadership and employee performance. (Avolio et al., 1999) stated that transformational leaders who provide inspiration, intellectual challenge, and individual attention will increase employee motivation, which will ultimately improve organizational performance.

#### **Conclusions**

The results of this study show that transformational leadership has a significant direct influence on employee performance and work motivation, both at PT Krakatau Steel and at the Ministry of Industry. Leaders who use a transformational approach, by providing inspiration, motivation, and individualized attention to employees, are able to increase their productivity and commitment to achieving organizational goals. This influence is even stronger when work motivation acts as a mediator, where employees' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations contribute directly to performance improvement.

In addition to direct influence, work motivation has proven to be a significant mediating variable in strengthening the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. These findings support the theory that effective leaders focus not only on the end result, but also on the process of developing employee motivation and engagement. High motivation encourages employees to be more proactive, committed, and innovative in carrying out their tasks, which ultimately has a positive impact on the overall performance of the organization.

Further research can develop this study by expanding the research object to other industrial sectors or the private sector to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of transformational leadership in various organizational contexts. Additionally, researchers may consider other factors that may act as moderators or mediators, such as organizational climate or organizational commitment, that may affect the relationship between leadership and employee performance.

Future research could also explore more deeply the long-term effects of transformational leadership, including its ongoing impact on employee retention, job satisfaction, and career development. Researchers can also use longitudinal methods to see how transformational leadership affects employee performance over time, so that it can provide a more holistic picture of the impact of this leadership style on the sustainability of organizational performance.

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