

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance: The Mediating Roles of Work Discipline and Work Motivation at BKPSDM Ternate City

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: This study examines the direct effect of transformational leadership on employee performance and the indirect effects mediated by work discipline and work motivation at the Personnel and Human Resources Development Agency (BKPSDM) of Ternate City. **Design/methodology/approach:** The study applied a quantitative explanatory design. The population comprised 83 employees, and 67 valid responses were analyzed. Data were collected using a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS 4.0. The measurement model was assessed through indicator loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), cross-loadings, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, HTMT, Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability. The structural model was evaluated using R-square, f-square, Q-square, path coefficients, and bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples. **Findings:** Transformational leadership significantly improves employee performance, work discipline, and work motivation. Work discipline significantly improves employee performance and mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. In contrast, work motivation does not significantly affect employee performance and does not mediate the relationship. **Originality/value:** The findings clarify that, in a regulation-based public-sector setting, leadership contributes to employee performance more strongly through disciplined work behavior than through motivational mechanisms alone.

Keywords:

transformational leadership; employee performance; work discipline; work motivation; PLS-SEM; public-sector management

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INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a central determinant of organizational effectiveness because it reflects not only the outcomes achieved by employees but also the behavioral contribution, responsibility, and role execution that support organizational objectives (Afandi, 2018; Mangkunegara, 2016; Wibowo, 2016). In public-sector organizations, performance has strategic relevance because civil servants are directly associated with the quality, accountability, and responsiveness of public services.

In Indonesia, the management of civil servants is increasingly oriented toward discipline, measurable performance, and continuous performance dialogue. Government Regulation Number 94 of 2021 concerning Civil Servant Discipline establishes obligations, prohibitions, and administrative sanctions for civil servants, while Regulation of the Minister of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform Number 6 of 2022 regulates performance management for State Civil Apparatus employees (Government of Indonesia, 2021; Ministry of Administrative and Bureaucratic Reform, 2022). These regulatory instruments place work discipline and performance management at the core of bureaucratic reform.

The Ternate City Personnel and Human Resources Development Agency (BKPSDM) performs a strategic function in personnel administration, employee competency development, transfers and appointments, and disciplinary enforcement within the Ternate City Government. Therefore, the performance of BKPSDM employees is not merely an

individual work outcome but also an indicator of the effectiveness of regional bureaucratic management.

Empirical conditions at BKPSDM Ternate City indicate that organizational performance has not been fully stable. Internal documents, including the Agency Performance Accountability Report (LAKIP) and Strategic Plan (Renstra) for 2021-2024, show fluctuations in several key performance indicators. Attendance records from May to October 2025 also show inconsistent work discipline. Full attendance was relatively high in June and September 2025, at 90.3% and 87.1%, respectively. However, July and October 2025 showed a noticeable decline, with 16.1% of employees recording attendance below 80% in October. These patterns suggest that work discipline is not yet consistently institutionalized.

Transformational leadership is relevant to this organizational context because it emphasizes idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Robbins & Judge, 2017). Leaders who provide direction, role modeling, inspiration, and support are expected to build disciplined work behavior and encourage employees to contribute beyond minimum formal requirements.

Prior findings remain mixed regarding the mechanisms linking transformational leadership, work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance. Sulle et al. (2024) found that work discipline mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance, whereas Hasbiyadi and Azis (2021) reported a nonsignificant mediating role of discipline. Similarly, Anggriani et al. (2022) and Sari et al. (2025) found that transformational leadership increases work motivation, while Souhoka (2025) and Septyawan et al. (2024) reported that motivation does not always translate into improved employee performance.

This study therefore examines the direct effect of transformational leadership on employee performance and the mediating roles of work discipline and work motivation among BKPSDM Ternate City employees. The study contributes to public-sector human resource management by clarifying whether performance improvement in a bureaucratic setting operates primarily through behavioral discipline, psychological motivation, or both.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

1. Social Exchange Theory

This study is grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), which explains that relationships in organizations are formed through reciprocal exchange mechanisms (Blau, 1964). In leader-employee relationships, employees tend to respond positively when leaders provide trust, recognition, support, and fair treatment. These positive leader behaviors can generate reciprocal outcomes such as loyalty, discipline, commitment, and stronger performance.

Transformational leadership is consistent with SET because it builds social and psychological exchange through inspiration, role modeling, individual attention, and intellectual stimulation. When employees perceive that leaders support their development and provide clear direction, they are more likely to reciprocate through disciplined work behavior and improved task accomplishment.

2. Employee Performance

Employee performance refers to the level of work achievement demonstrated in carrying out duties and responsibilities within an organization (Afandi, 2018). Performance also reflects the results of work processes evaluated over a particular period based on agreed standards (Mangkunegara, 2016). In this study, employee performance is

understood as the extent to which employees complete assigned tasks effectively, responsibly, and in accordance with organizational expectations.

3. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a leadership approach through which leaders influence followers by building trust, pride, loyalty, and commitment to a shared organizational vision (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Transformational leaders inspire followers to align personal interests with broader organizational goals, stimulate new ways of thinking, and serve as role models (Robbins & Judge, 2017). In public organizations, this leadership style is expected to foster compliance, commitment, and higher performance.

4. Work Discipline

Work discipline is the awareness and willingness of employees to comply with organizational rules, procedures, and norms (Hasibuan, 2017). It is reflected in attendance, punctuality, adherence to work procedures, and responsibility in completing assigned tasks (Rivai, 2009). In bureaucratic organizations, discipline is especially important because work processes are governed by formal standards and legal-administrative accountability.

5. Work Motivation

Work motivation is a psychological process that determines the intensity, direction, and persistence of work-related behavior (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Motivation may arise from intrinsic drivers, such as achievement and personal development, or extrinsic drivers, such as rewards and recognition. In organizational practice, motivation encourages employees to contribute effort toward achieving institutional goals (Siagian, 2014).

6. Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical and empirical arguments above, the conceptual model positions transformational leadership as the exogenous construct, employee performance as the endogenous outcome, and work discipline and work motivation as mediating variables.

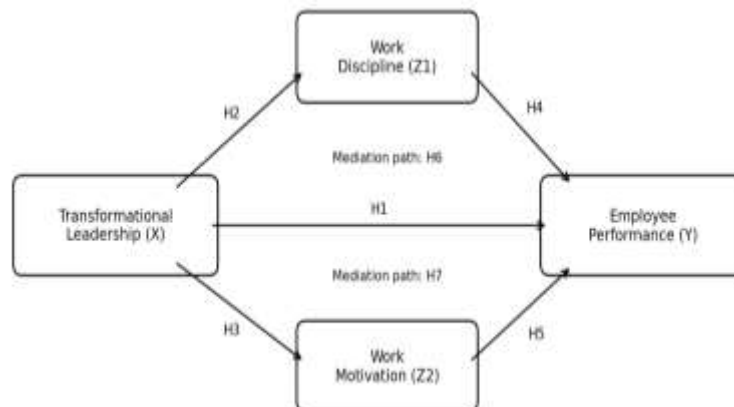


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

METHOD

This study employed a quantitative explanatory research design to examine the direct and indirect relationships among transformational leadership, work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance. The research was conducted at the Ternate City Personnel and Human Resources Development Agency (BKPSDM), a public sector institution responsible for managing personnel administration and human resource development within the Ternate City Government. The population of this study consisted of all 83 BKPSDM employees. Using a census sampling approach, all members of the

population were targeted as respondents; however, 67 valid responses were obtained and used for further analysis. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale. The data collection process was carried out from December 2025 to January 2026.

The questionnaire was designed to measure four latent constructs, namely transformational leadership, work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance. The measurement items for transformational leadership were adapted from Bass and Avolio (1994) and relevant leadership literature, while the indicators for work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance were developed based on established theoretical sources in human resource management and organizational behavior. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4.0. The measurement model was assessed through indicator loadings, Average Variance Extracted (AVE), cross-loadings, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, the Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT), Cronbach's alpha, and composite reliability. The structural model was evaluated using R-square, adjusted R-square, f-square, Q-square predictive relevance, path coefficients, and bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples to test both direct and mediating effects (Hair et al., 2019, 2021; Henseler et al., 2015). All findings were reported in aggregate form to ensure respondent confidentiality, and no individual respondent was identified. The interpretation of the results was based on the original empirical data without altering the study's hypotheses or substantive conclusions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed through outer loadings and AVE. Indicator loadings of 0.70 or higher are generally preferred, although loadings above 0.60 may be retained in social science research when supported by theory and reliability evidence (Hair et al., 2014, 2021). The outer loading results show that all retained indicators exceeded 0.60.

Table 1. Convergent validity based on outer loadings

	Transformational Leadership	Employee Performance	Work Discipline	Work motivation	Note
X.1	0.799				Valid
X.10	0.687				Valid
X.2	0.730				Valid
X.3	0.830				Valid
X.4	0.721				Valid
X.5	0.752				Valid
X.6	0.778				Valid
X.7	0.789				Valid
X.8	0.800				Valid
X.9	0.772				Valid
Y.1		0.658			Valid
Y.2		0.698			Valid
Y.3		0.753			Valid

	Transformational Leadership	Employee Performance	Work Discipline	Work motivation	Note
Y.4		0.685			Valid
Y.5		0.758			Valid
Y.7		0.714			Valid
Y.9		0.708			Valid
Z1.1			0.690		Valid
Z1.2			0.688		Valid
Z1.3			0.748		Valid
Z1.4			0.742		Valid
Z1.5			0.696		Valid
Z2.1				0.713	Valid
Z2.2				0.618	Valid
Z2.3				0.714	Valid
Z2.4				0.705	Valid
Z2.5				0.667	Valid
Z2.6				0.630	Valid
Z2.9				0.706	Valid

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

The AVE values for work discipline, transformational leadership, and employee performance exceeded 0.50. The AVE for work motivation was 0.462, which is slightly below the conventional 0.50 threshold; therefore, this construct should be interpreted as marginal in terms of convergent validity. It was retained because the indicator loadings were above 0.60 and the composite reliability value exceeded 0.70.

Table 2. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Note
Work Discipline	0.508	Valid
Transformational Leadership	0.588	Valid
Employee Performance	0.506	Valid
Work motivation	0.462	Valid

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

2. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was examined using cross-loadings, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the HTMT ratio. Each indicator loaded most strongly on its intended construct, supporting discriminant validity at the indicator level.

Table 3. Cross-loadings for discriminant validity

	Transformational Leadership	Employee Performance	Work Discipline	Work motivation	Note
X.1	0.799	0.745	0.584	0.614	Valid
X.10	0.687	0.348	0.405	0.471	Valid
X.2	0.730	0.481	0.499	0.549	Valid
X.3	0.830	0.576	0.509	0.590	Valid
X.4	0.721	0.575	0.468	0.593	Valid
X.5	0.752	0.692	0.564	0.528	Valid
X.6	0.778	0.537	0.576	0.507	Valid
X.7	0.789	0.505	0.544	0.641	Valid
X.8	0.800	0.495	0.423	0.575	Valid
X.9	0.772	0.446	0.445	0.703	Valid
Y.1	0.387	0.658	0.407	0.379	Valid
Y.2	0.389	0.698	0.464	0.261	Valid
Y.3	0.516	0.753	0.566	0.394	Valid
Y.4	0.600	0.685	0.445	0.415	Valid
Y.5	0.512	0.758	0.524	0.372	Valid
Y.7	0.555	0.714	0.468	0.494	Valid
Y.9	0.563	0.708	0.425	0.478	Valid
Z1.1	0.504	0.396	0.690	0.304	Valid
Z1.2	0.413	0.353	0.688	0.349	Valid
Z1.3	0.364	0.480	0.748	0.349	Valid
Z1.4	0.564	0.595	0.742	0.499	Valid
Z1.5	0.469	0.500	0.696	0.450	Valid
Z2.1	0.483	0.407	0.261	0.713	Valid
Z2.2	0.441	0.340	0.445	0.618	Valid
Z2.3	0.580	0.231	0.332	0.714	Valid
Z2.4	0.511	0.328	0.380	0.705	Valid
Z2.5	0.517	0.437	0.513	0.667	Valid
Z2.6	0.514	0.499	0.398	0.630	Valid
Z2.9	0.535	0.414	0.322	0.706	Valid

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

The Fornell-Larcker results show that the square root of each construct's AVE was higher than its correlations with other constructs. The HTMT values were also below the recommended threshold of 0.90 (Henseler et al., 2015).

Table 4. Fornell-Larcker criterion

	Work Discipline	Transformational Leadership	Employee Performance	Work motivation	Note
Work Discipline	0.713				Valid
Transformational Leadership	0.660	0.767			Valid
Employee Performance	0.666	0.717	0.711		Valid
Work motivation	0.558	0.755	0.566	0.680	Valid

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

Table 5. Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio (HTMT)

	Work Discipline	Transformational Leadership	Employee Performance	Work motivation	Note
Work Discipline					Valid
Transformational Leadership	0.768				Valid
Employee Performance	0.812	0.791			Valid
Work motivation	0.706	0.871	0.674		Valid

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

3. Reliability

Reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. All constructs exceeded the minimum reliability threshold of 0.70, indicating acceptable internal consistency (Hair et al., 2014, 2021).

Table 6. Construct reliability

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)	Note
Transformational Leadership	0.922	0.925	0.934	0.588	Reliable
Employee Performance	0.837	0.841	0.877	0.506	Reliable
Work Discipline	0.760	0.767	0.838	0.508	Reliable
Work motivation	0.806	0.806	0.857	0.462	Reliable

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

4. Structural Model Evaluation

The R-square values indicate that the model explains 43.5% of the variance in work discipline, 57.0% of the variance in work motivation, and 58.0% of the variance in employee performance. Based on Hair et al. (2014), these values fall within the moderate explanatory category.

Table 7. R-square and adjusted R-square values

	R-square	R-square adjusted	Note
Work Discipline	0.435	0.427	Moderate
Employee Performance	0.580	0.560	Moderate
Work motivation	0.570	0.564	Moderate

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

The f-square results indicate that transformational leadership has a substantial effect size on work discipline and work motivation, while work motivation has a negligible effect size on employee performance. This result is consistent with the nonsignificant direct path from work motivation to employee performance.

Table 8. Effect size (f-square)

	Work Discipline	Transformational Leadership	Employee Performance	Work motivation
Work Discipline			0.153	
Transformational Leadership	0.771		0.194	1.327
Employee Performance				
Work motivation			0.000	

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

The Q-square predictive relevance values for all endogenous constructs were above zero, indicating that the model has predictive relevance for work discipline, work motivation, and employee performance (Hair et al., 2019, 2021).

Table 9. Predictive relevance (Q-square)

	Q ² predict
Work Discipline	0.411
Work motivation	0.540
Employee Performance	0.491

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

5. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing was conducted using the bootstrapping procedure. A relationship was considered significant when the t-statistic was greater than 1.96 and the p-value was below 0.05.

Table 10. Path coefficient results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Information
Work Discipline -> Employee Performance	0.341	0.355	0.120	2.834	0.005	Accepted
Transformational Leadership Style -> Work Discipline	0.660	0.672	0.067	9.804	0.000	Accepted
Transformational Leadership Style -> Employee Performance	0.484	0.468	0.153	3.155	0.002	Accepted
Transformational Leadership Style -> Work Motivation	0.755	0.766	0.048	15.572	0.000	Accepted
Work Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.011	0.022	0.127	0.083	0.934	Rejected

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

The results support H1, H2, H3, and H4. Transformational leadership significantly affects employee performance ($O = 0.484, p = 0.002$), work discipline ($O = 0.660, p < 0.001$), and work motivation ($O = 0.755, p < 0.001$). Work discipline also significantly affects employee performance ($O = 0.341, p = 0.005$). H5 is rejected because work motivation does not significantly affect employee performance ($O = 0.011, p = 0.934$).

6. Mediation Testing

The mediation analysis examined specific indirect effects through work discipline and work motivation.

Table 11. Mediation test results

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics (O/STDEV)	P values	Note
Transformational Leadership Style -> Work Discipline -> Employee Performance	0.225	0.237	0.082	2.747	0.006	Significant
Transformational Leadership Style -> Work Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.008	0.017	0.099	0.080	0.936	Not Significant

Source: Primary data processed by the researchers (2026).

The indirect effect of transformational leadership on employee performance through work discipline is significant ($O = 0.225, t = 2.747, p = 0.006$), supporting H6. The indirect effect through work motivation is not significant ($O = 0.008, t = 0.080, p = 0.936$), so H7 is rejected.

Discussion

1. Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

Transformational leadership significantly improves employee performance at BKPSDM Ternate City. This finding indicates that leaders who provide vision, direction, role modeling, and support can strengthen employee performance in a public-sector organization. The result is consistent with Septyawan et al. (2024), Arniah and Setiawan (2024), Amelia et al. (2022), and Setiadi and Lutfi (2021), who found that transformational leadership contributes positively to employee performance.

2. Transformational Leadership and Work Discipline

Transformational leadership also significantly improves work discipline. This result suggests that employees are more likely to comply with work rules, working hours, and task responsibilities when leaders provide consistent direction and supervision. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, disciplined behavior can be interpreted as a reciprocal response to supportive and exemplary leadership (Blau, 1964). This finding supports Sulle et al. (2024), Setiadi and Lutfi (2021), and Utomo et al. (2021).

3. Transformational Leadership and Work Motivation

The results show that transformational leadership significantly increases work motivation. This indicates that leadership practices involving attention, inspiration, and support can enhance employees' willingness to work. This finding is consistent with Anggriani et al. (2022), Arniah and Setiawan (2024), Dewantoro (2023), and Sari et al. (2025).

4. Work Discipline and Employee Performance

Work discipline significantly improves employee performance. Employees who comply with work rules, maintain attendance, and complete tasks on time are more likely to achieve performance targets. This result is particularly relevant in a government agency

where work processes are formalized and subject to administrative accountability. The result supports Amelia et al. (2022), Arniah and Setiawan (2024), Septyawan et al. (2024), and Setiadi and Lutfi (2021).

5. Work Motivation and Employee Performance

Work motivation does not significantly affect employee performance in this study. Although employees may report high motivation, motivation alone may not be sufficient to improve performance when work outcomes are strongly shaped by rules, supervision, formal procedures, and compliance requirements. This result is consistent with Sulle et al. (2024), Hasbiyadi and Azis (2021), and Souhoka (2025), who found that motivation does not always translate directly into performance in public-sector or bureaucratic settings.

6. Mediation through Work Discipline

Work discipline significantly mediates the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance. This finding indicates that transformational leadership improves performance partly by shaping disciplined work behavior. In the BKPSDM context, leadership that provides direction and role modeling appears to become more effective when it is translated into punctuality, compliance, responsibility, and task completion. This supports Sulle et al. (2024), Setiadi and Lutfi (2021), and Arniah and Setiawan (2024).

7. Mediation through Work Motivation

Work motivation does not mediate the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance. Although transformational leadership increases motivation, the motivation-performance path is nonsignificant. This indicates that psychological encouragement alone does not necessarily lead to higher performance unless it is accompanied by disciplined behavior, structured supervision, and clear performance standards. The finding is aligned with Souhoka (2025) and Hasbiyadi and Azis (2021).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, work discipline, and work motivation at BKPSDM Ternate City. Work discipline has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and significantly mediates the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance. Work motivation, however, does not significantly affect employee performance and does not mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. These findings indicate that, in the studied public-sector context, transformational leadership improves performance primarily by strengthening disciplined work behavior rather than by relying solely on motivational mechanisms.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, this study strengthens the application of Social Exchange Theory in public-sector human resource management by showing that positive leader behavior is reciprocated more clearly through disciplined work behavior than through motivation alone. The findings also refine transformational leadership literature by demonstrating that leadership-performance relationships may depend on behavioral mechanisms that are closely aligned with bureaucratic accountability.

Practically, BKPSDM Ternate City should strengthen transformational leadership practices through role modeling, structured communication, performance feedback, and consistent supervision. Leadership development programs should be linked with attendance monitoring, task accountability, and performance dialogue. Motivation programs should not stand alone; they need to be connected with measurable work standards, recognition systems, and discipline-based performance management.

Limitations and Future Research

First, this study was conducted in a single public-sector agency, so the findings may not be generalizable to all government institutions. Future studies should compare multiple agencies or regions.

Second, the study used cross-sectional survey data; therefore, causal interpretation should be made cautiously. Longitudinal designs would provide stronger evidence regarding changes in leadership, discipline, motivation, and performance over time.

Third, the work motivation construct had an AVE value below 0.50, although its reliability remained acceptable. Future studies should refine the measurement items for work motivation and consider adding additional indicators with stronger convergent validity.

Fourth, the study relied on self-reported questionnaire data. Future research may combine survey data with objective performance indicators, attendance records, and supervisor evaluations.

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