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The Role of Transformational Leadership and Work Discipline in Driving Public Sector Employee Performance

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the influence of transformational leadership and work discipline on employee performance at the Dampit Sub-District Office, Malang Regency. Previous studies have shown inconsistent results regarding the direct impact of transformational leadership, particularly in highly procedural public sector organizations dominated by new employees. This research employs a quantitative causal-associative approach. A saturated sampling technique (census) was used, involving all 50 employees as respondents. Data were collected through a validated 5-point Likert scale questionnaire and analyzed using multiple linear regression with SPSS. The results indicate that simultaneously, transformational leadership and work discipline significantly affect employee performance (R2=0.850R2=0.850; F=132.702F=132.702; Sig.=0.000Sig.=0.000). Partially, work discipline has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (β=0.935β=0.935; t=7.495t=7.495; Sig.=0.000Sig.=0.000), while transformational leadership does not have a significant effect (t=−0.117t=−0.117; Sig.=0.908Sig.=0.908). These findings suggest that in a procedural bureaucratic context, strengthening work discipline is the primary strategy to enhance employee performance, whereas transformational leadership serves as a complementary factor.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Work Discipline, Employee Performance

INTRODUCTION

Employee performance is a primary factor in determining the success of an organization, particularly in government institutions oriented toward public services. In the context of bureaucratic reform, public organizations are required to provide effective, efficient, transparent, and accountable services to the community. Conceptually, employee performance reflects the work results achieved by individuals in accordance with organizational standards, both in terms of quality and quantity (Mangkunegara, 2017;

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Robbins & Judge, 2017). Public services at the sub-district level are the frontline of bureaucracy. However, field observations indicate that punctuality in completing administration remains a recurring issue, requiring serious intervention from organizational management.

In practice, performance is influenced by various interconnected organizational factors. Two of them are transformational leadership and work discipline. Transformational leadership, characterized by idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, is believed to be able to awaken subordinates' commitment and enthusiasm (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Robbins & Judge, 2017). Meanwhile, work discipline functions as the foundation of compliance with rules and operational procedures, which is a prerequisite for the implementation of tasks (Hasibuan, 2019; Sutrisno, 2016).

Previous empirical studies on these variables have shown mixed results. Some studies confirm the positive influence of both variables (Ramadhandhy & Maryati, 2023; Priska et al., 2023; Aryoko et al., 2020). However, other studies found that transformational leadership does not always have a positive effect, and can even be negative in certain conditions (Hilmawan, 2023; Hasana & Helmi, 2023). This inconsistency creates a research gap, particularly regarding how these variables interact in highly procedural public organizations, such as sub-district offices, which are dominated by employees with relatively short tenures.

This study offers novelty by testing the direct effects of transformational leadership and work discipline on employee performance without involving mediating or moderating variables. The focus on the Dampit Sub-District Office provides a specific perspective from a public service unit that is rarely studied empirically. Furthermore, by using a saturated sampling technique (census) involving all 50 employees, this study avoids sampling bias and provides a comprehensive picture of the organization. The objective of this study is to analyze the simultaneous and partial effects of transformational leadership and work discipline on employee performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee performance is the work result achieved by an individual based on the role given, measured through standards or criteria set by the organization (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Mangkunegara (2017) defines performance as the quality and quantity of work achieved by an employee in carrying out duties according to assigned responsibilities. Indicators used to measure performance include work quality, work quantity, responsibility, cooperation, and initiative.

Transformational leadership is a leadership style that inspires followers to put aside personal interests for the sake of the organization through a clear vision, spirit, and

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motivation (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Bass and Avolio (1994) identify four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Work discipline is the awareness and willingness of a person to obey all organizational regulations and applicable social norms (Hasibuan, 2019). Indicators of work discipline include compliance with regulations, effective use of time, responsibility for work, adherence to work standards, and attendance levels.

The relationship between transformational leadership and performance is theoretically explained through the leader's ability to build trust, provide meaning to work, and encourage innovation. However, in highly procedural bureaucracies, employee discretion is limited, which can weaken the effect of intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation (Hilmawan, 2023). Meanwhile, the relationship between work discipline and performance is operational and measurable. Discipline ensures availability through consistent attendance, ensures processes follow procedures, and encourages timely task completion, directly impacting output quality and quantity (Hasibuan, 2019; Sutrisno, 2016). Simultaneously, leadership provides direction and energy, while discipline provides structure and certainty, creating a productive work ecosystem.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research employs a quantitative approach with a causal-associative design to test cause-and-effect relationships between variables. The population in this study consists of all 50 employees at the Dampit Sub-District Office, Malang Regency. Considering the relatively small population size, the sampling technique used is saturated sampling (census), meaning all members of the population are included as research respondents. This aims to minimize sampling error and provide a comprehensive representation of the organization.

Primary data were collected through a questionnaire using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). Prior to hypothesis testing, the instrument was tested for validity and reliability. The validity test showed that all item correlation values (r-count) were greater than the r-table (0.2200), and the reliability test showed Cronbach's Alpha values for Transformational Leadership (0.950), Work Discipline (0.952), and Employee Performance (0.904), all exceeding the 0.60 threshold, confirming the instrument is valid and reliable.

The data analysis technique used is multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS software. The analysis includes classical assumption tests (normality, multicollinearity, heteroscedasticity), and hypothesis testing through simultaneous F-tests, partial t-tests, and the coefficient of determination (R2R2).

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RESULT

The classical assumption tests indicate that the regression model meets the required criteria. The multicollinearity test shows a Tolerance value of 0.206 and a VIF of 4.858 (VIF < 10), indicating no multicollinearity. The heteroscedasticity test using the Glejser test shows significance values of 0.911 for transformational leadership and 0.407 for work discipline (both > 0.05), meaning no heteroscedasticity occurs. The normality test shows an Asymp. Sig. of 0.037. Although slightly below 0.05, the visual analysis of the histogram and Normal P-P Plot shows the residual distribution approaches normality, and with a sample size of 50, the regression analysis remains robust.

The multiple linear regression analysis produced the following equation: Y = 3.604 − 0.018X1 + 0.925X2 + e. The results of hypothesis testing, covering the simultaneous F-test, partial t-test, and coefficient of determination (R^2), are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Multiple Linear Regression Analysis Results

Analysis Type	Variable / Model	Coefficient (B)	t-statistic / F-statistic	Sig.	Result
Partial (t-test)	(Constant)	3.604	1.357	0.181	-
	Transformational Leadership (X1)	-0.018	-0.117	0.908	Not Significant
	Work Discipline (X2)	0.925	7.495	0.000	Significant
Simultaneous (F-test)	X1, X2 → Y	-	132.702	0.000	Significant
Model Summary	R = 0.922; R Square = 0.850	-	-	-	-

The simultaneous hypothesis test (F-test) yields an FF value of 132.702 with a significance of 0.000 (<0.05). Thus, H1 is accepted, meaning transformational leadership and work discipline simultaneously have a significant effect on employee performance. The coefficient of determination test shows an R2 value of 0.850, indicating that 85.0% of the variance in employee performance can be explained by the two independent variables, while the remaining 15.0% is explained by other variables not examined in this study.

The partial hypothesis test (t-test) shows that for transformational leadership (X1), the tt value is -0.117 with a significance of 0.908 (>0.05), so H2 is rejected. Transformational leadership does not significantly affect employee performance. For

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work discipline (X2), the tt value is 7.495 with a significance of 0.000 (<0.05), so H3 is accepted. Work discipline has a positive and significant effect on employee performance.

DISCUSSION

The finding that transformational leadership does not significantly affect employee performance partially contrasts with classical leadership theories. In the context of the Dampit Sub-District Office, performance issues are dominated by procedural and administrative matters, such as attendance delays and inaccurate time management. Employees with less than five years of tenure dominate the respondent profile (56.0%). New employees are generally in the adaptation phase and require procedural certainty, clear direction, and attached supervision rather than visionary inspiration. In a highly procedural bureaucratic organization, the space for employee discretion to act creatively is limited. Consequently, the effect of intellectual stimulation and inspirational motivation becomes blunt because employees do not have the freedom to change established procedures (Hilmawan, 2023; Hasana & Helmi, 2023).

Conversely, work discipline is proven to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This confirms that high discipline encourages employees to attend on time, complete tasks according to schedule, and take responsibility. From all dimensions of work discipline, compliance with regulations and adherence to work standards are the main strengths driving productivity. However, the attendance dimension has the lowest score, indicating that there are still unexcused absences that need serious attention. This finding aligns with Aryoko et al. (2020) and Kurniawati (2023), who found that discipline is a dominant factor compared to leadership in influencing performance, especially in procedural public organizations.

Simultaneously, transformational leadership and work discipline significantly affect employee performance. This indicates that although partially transformational leadership is not significant, when combined with work discipline, it provides a substantial contribution. Leadership acts as a catalyst that strengthens the impact of discipline, creating an organizational ecosystem that supports optimal performance. This synergy is crucial for maintaining public service productivity, as the combination of inspirational leadership and consistent discipline forms a solid foundation for achieving organizational goals.

CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership does not partially have a significant effect on employee performance at the Dampit Sub-District Office. Despite being perceived positively by employees, the highly procedural nature of the bureaucracy and the dominance of new employees require technical certainty and strict supervision rather

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than visionary inspiration. Work discipline, on the other hand, has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. Compliance with regulations and work standards are the primary drivers of productivity, although the attendance aspect still requires improvement. Simultaneously, transformational leadership and work discipline significantly affect employee performance, with an 85.0% contribution.

Practically, management should strengthen work discipline through attached supervision and firm, educational sanctions, particularly targeting attendance. Transformational leadership should be maintained with a focus on individualized consideration and idealized influence, as new employees require personal guidance. Limitations of this study include the relatively small sample size and the cross-sectional design. Future research is encouraged to add mediating variables such as work motivation or job satisfaction, use qualitative or mixed methods, and expand the research scope to other government agencies to test the generalizability of the findings.

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