



Increasing Employee's Job Satisfaction Through the Implementation of Transformational Leadership and Work Stress Level Management

Bachruddin Saleh Luturlean,*¹ Arif Partono Prasetio,² Romat Saragih¹

^{1,3} School of Communications & Business, Telkom Univeristy, Jl Telekomunikasi, 40257, Bandung, Indonesia

² School of Economics & Business & Communication, Telkom Univeristy, Jl Telekomunikasi, 40257, Bandung, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Objective – The objective of this paper is to examine the relationship between transformational leadership, work stress and job satisfaction. Based on previous studies, we proposed that work stress will mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employees' job satisfaction.

Methodology/Technique – Data was collected from 248 employees working in three organizations in Java Island, Indonesia. To test the hypotheses, we used regression analysis and a bootstrapping approach with a Macro Process.

Findings – The results of this study show that transformational leadership has a positive relationship with employee job satisfaction. However, transformational leadership does not have significant relationship with work stress. This therefore means that there is no mediation of work stress either.

Novelty – This empirical study provides a first glance at the correlation between the variables. Future studies should consider using more participants from across Indonesia to properly reflect the cultural difference among other provinces.

Type of Paper: Empirical.

Keywords: Work Motivation; Job Satisfaction; Affective Commitment; Mediation; Human Resources.

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JEL Classification: M10, M12, M19.

1. Introduction

It is believed that a positive working environment can stimulate good individual performance which contributes to the overall success of an organization and can improve employee job satisfaction. Various studies have produced strong evidence regarding the importance of employee satisfaction and its effect on employee behaviour in various industries (Onsardi et. al., 2016; Tosun & Ulusoy, 2017). Employee satisfaction is important because it can lead to better communication, better service and improved company performance. To promote job satisfaction, organizations must identify the crucial factors that affect employee satisfaction.

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* Corresponding author: Bachruddin Saleh Luturlean

E-mail: bachruddinsaleh.luturlean@gmail.com

Affiliation: School of Communications & Business, Telkom University, Indonesia

This study will examine the role of transformational leadership and work stress in developing job satisfaction among employees. Leadership is viewed as one of the important aspects in creating a positive working environment as leaders can drive good social interaction and motivation. Garcia-Morales et. al. (2008) and Arif and Akram (2018) identified a strong correlation between leadership and organizational performance. Among the various concepts regarding leadership style, transformational leadership has become quite popular and is believed to contribute significantly to the success of organizations. Recent research addressing transformational leadership style demonstrates a significant and positive correlation with organizational commitment (Abouraia & Othman, 2017), job satisfaction (Hakim & Ibrahim, 2017), employee performance (Deconinck & Beth, 2013) and motivation (Graves et. al., 2013). In contrast, there is a negative correlation between transformational style and work stress (Nielsen & Daniel, 2016). Employees who perceive their leadership style as transformational develop lower work stress and as result they rarely become ill.

People face stress from everyday work and private life. However, stress is also needed as a source of motivation for effective action and higher achievements. Nevertheless, excessive pressure can have negative effects such as dissatisfaction or health which may compromise an individual (Khuong & Yen, 2016) and organizational performance (Ongori & Agolla, 2008). Employees deal with tight deadlines and achieve their goals to maintain their performance. If not handled properly, work stress can affect employee attitude and performance. Managers in various organizations should be able to identify the signs of occupational stress in order to reduce work stress.

Organizations in Indonesia face tough competition in a complex business environment. In order to survive, they must improvise and innovate. They need their most important assets, that is, human resources, to excel. Increasing work demand can lead to stress and unhappy employees which in the end will hinder their performance. In order to keep up with the with increasing job demands, organizations must rely on its leaders. The role of a leader is to affect employee work behavior. Organizations need to provide leadership that shows they care, shows empathy, and supports its employees. With this approach, they can encourage employees to work better and achieve the organization's goals. Understanding the link between transformational style, work-related stress and job satisfaction is therefore vital. Employee well-being has been a prominent issue for a long time in the Indonesia context.

Globalisation and the rapid development of the Southeast Asian economies, with increasing numbers of multinational companies investing in the country, have made it essential for companies to improve their competitive ability. This has resulted in increased demands on employees to perform better which could increase their levels of stress. The transformational leadership style is expected to increase employee morale and confidence. Hence, together, leaders and employees become involved in positive and productive interactions to manage stress and develop job satisfaction.

Thus, our model proposes that an employer's decision to provide leaders who focus on both company targets and employee well-being may develop a more supportive work environment that reduces work stress factors and enhances job satisfaction. The practical contribution of this study is the view that organizations should pay more attention to its leadership style which can influence employee work behavior. They need to identify what is the most appropriate style which can improve employee job satisfaction. This study provides further investigation into the antecedents of job satisfaction from different business organization in Indonesia. This may improve the comprehensiveness of such studies in the future.

2. Literature Review

To explain the relationship between the variables, we refer to the social exchange theory which posit that if an individual receives good treatment, they will reciprocate that treatment in the same fashion. Transformational leadership promotes a positive relationship between leaders and their subordinates. Leaders develop and give employees adequate resources to grow, and they also act with empathy. This behavior can

decrease employee stress and enhance their job satisfaction. Before we explain the relationship between the variables, we will first discuss the concept of the constructs. Baysak and Yener (2015) define transformational leadership as a style of leadership in which leaders always motivate followers to work toward their goals. The characteristics of transformational leadership style aim to inspire followers by increasing their commitment to better performance.

Transformational leadership style promotes positive interactions with subordinates through motivation, encouragement, and emphasizing that achieving organizational goals will have a positive impact on individual achievement. The positive impact of transformational leadership include higher motivation (Graves et. al., 2013), organizational citizenship behavior (Kim, 2012), and reduced employee turnover (Ennis et. al., 2016). Transformational leadership also changes the employee's perspective of the organization and will make them more willing to carry out work above and beyond what is usually required of them (Mujkić et. al., 2014). Stress is an individual response to the demands arising from work and private life. Stress also arises from excessive job demands, constraints, and limited opportunities. Robbins and Judge (2017) define stress as a dynamic condition experienced by individuals when they are faced with opportunities, demands and resources to fulfill their interests where the end result is not certain. Job stress can occur due to several factors: leadership style (Al-Hosam et. al., 2016), motivation levels (Wani, 2013), and perceived support (Jain et. al., 2013).

Organizations need to pay attention to these factors to avoid the potential negative impact of stress on employees and the company such as deteriorating health, anxiety, job dissatisfaction and low performance. Job satisfaction is important and must be well-maintained and improved overtime. Maleki (2016) describes job satisfaction as an employee's emotional response and behaviour after evaluating the various dimensions of their job. This assessment is the result of their experience over time. Organizations should identify important factors that affect employee satisfaction. Previous studies have identified factors that can be optimized to improve employee job satisfaction including leadership style (Yates, 2014), work stress (Kumar & Varma, 2017), and work-life balance (Azeem & Akhtar, 2014).

2.1 Transformational Leadership and Work Stress

Previous studies have discussed the relationship between transformational leadership and work stress and have provided differing results. However, most of the studies to date have identified a negative correlation. Most scientific publications support the negative relationship that is, when transformational leadership is applied, employee stress levels will decrease (Syrek et. al., 2013; Yao et. al., 2014; Baysak & Yener, 2015; Harms et. al., 2016; George et. al., 2017). Therefore, this study hypothesises that:

H1 - transformational leadership has a significant negative effect on work stress.

2.2 Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Effective leaders and employee job satisfaction are believed to be important elements in achieving organizational success. Employees with high job satisfaction tend to contribute more to pursuing organizational goals. Transformational leadership style also has positive relationship with job satisfaction (Mujkić et. al., 2014; Abouraia & Othman, 2017; Puni et. al., 2018; Nasra & Heilbrunn, 2015; Braun et. al., 2013). Therefore, this study hypothesises that:

H2 - transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on employee job satisfaction.

2.3 Work Stress and Job Satisfaction

Stress can influence employee behavior at work and significantly affect the profitability, productivity, effectiveness, and efficiency of organizations. Stress can affect employee satisfaction levels which results in lower performance. Most studies that have linked work stress with lower job satisfaction identified a negative relationship between the two (Khan et. al., 2014; Bemana, et. al, 2013; DeTienne et. al, 2012; Kumar & Varma, 2017; Hosseinabadi et. al., 2018). Reducing the level of work stress can improve job satisfaction. Therefore, this study hypothesises that:

H3 - employee levels of stress have a negative effect on employee job satisfaction.

Further, this study hypothesises that:

H4 - work stress will mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction.

Figure 1 below shows the research model.

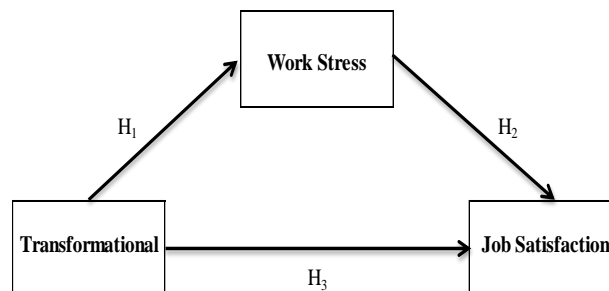


Figure 1. Research Model

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Participants

In this study, the respondents are from private organizations in Java Island, Indonesia. The samples include employees of different position levels; officer, supervisor, and manager. A total of 300 questionnaires were circulated and 248 were qualified to use. Among the respondents, 142 are male (57%) and 106 are female (43%). These employees were selected from consulting services, government, and technical organizations. 52% of the employees have worked for more than five years.

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	Number	Percentage	Characteristic	Category	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	142	57%	Tenure	< 1 years	22	9%
	Female	106	43%		1 - 3 years	35	14%
Age	< 25 years	38	15%		> 3 - 5 years	62	25%
	25 - 30 years	40	16%		> 5 - 10 years	64	26%
	> 30 - 35 years	50	20%		> 10 years	65	26%
	> 35 - 40 years	48	19%	Position	Officer	145	58%
	> 40 - 45 years	54	22%		Supervisor	68	27%
	> 45 - 50 years	14	6%		Manager	35	14%
	> 50 years	4	2%	Education	High School	63	25%
Marital	Married	178	72%		Diploma	75	30%
	Single	67	27%		Under Graduate	88	35%
	Separated	3	1%		Post Graduate	22	9%
Children	Yes	175	71%	Work Hour	≤9 hours	220	89%
	No	73	29%		>9 hours	28	11%

3.2 Measurement and Analysis

A comprehensive questionnaire comprising 33 items was used to measure the constructs. Reliabilities of the scales were .900 for job satisfaction (Prasetyo et. al., 2017), .926 for work stress (Elci et. al., 2012), and .879 for transformational (Baysak & Yener, 2015). The items for the constructs were based on a 6 point scale with anchors ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). Bootstrapping using the PROCESS Macro was used to test the significance of indirect effects (Hayes, 2018). Bootstrapping is considered an appropriate approach because it avoids normality assumptions of the sampling distribution (Preacher et. al., 2007).

4. Results

Table 2 shows the inter-construct correlations along with means and standard deviation. The correlation analysis of transformational leadership and work stress indicates there is no significant relationship ($p > .05$). Transformational leadership and job satisfaction however have a significant and positive relationship ($r = .589$). Meanwhile, work stress has a significant and negative relationship with job satisfaction ($r = -.222$).

Table 2. Correlations Between the Constructs

	Mean	Std. Deviation	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Age	3.3952	1.56799	248	1									
2. Marital	1.2944	.48254	248	-.615**	1								
3. Tenure	3.4637	1.26247	248	.776**	-.604**	1							
4. Position	1.5565	.72884	248	.239**	-.111	.084	1						
5. Children	1.2944	.45667	248	-.655**	.763**	-.617**	.239**	1					
6. Education	2.2782	.94334	248	.084	-.109	.034	.610**	-.144*	1				
7. Workhour	1.1129	.31711	248	-.009	.126*	-.020	.200**	.021	.219**	1			
8. Transformational	4.9121	.51458	248	-.070	.074	-.131*	.066	.109	.141*	.016	1		
9. Stress	3.3433	1.05806	248	-.187**	.253**	-.328**	.288**	.219**	.324**	.241**	.030	1	
10. Satisfaction	4.8375	.49729	248	.042	-.024	.082	-.174**	.036	-.238**	.011	.589**	-.222**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 3 presents the results of the regression analyses. According to the results, hypothesis H1 is not supported ($\beta = .080$, $SE = .142$, $p = 0.575$). However, hypothesis H2 is supported ($\beta = .613$, $SE = .051$, $p = 0.000$). Likewise, hypothesis H3 is also supported ($\beta = 1.110$, $SE = .023$, $p = 0.000$).

Table 3. Regression Coefficient, Standard Error and Model Summary

	Work Stress			Job Satisfaction		
	Coeff	SE	p-value	Coeff	SE	p-value
Transformational	0.080	0.142	0.575	0.613	0.051	0.000
Work Stress	-	-	-	-0.110	0.023	0.000
Constant	2.950	0.703	0.000	2.178	0.261	0.000
	R Square		0.001	R Square		0.399
	F =		0.315	F =		81.221
	p =		0.575	p =		0.000

Table 4 shows the insignificance test regarding the prediction of the mediation of work stress in the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. The results show that there is zero value between the lower level confidence interval and upper level confidence interval (-.041 to .025). Thus, hypothesis H4 is not supported. Work stress does not mediate transformational leadership and job satisfaction.

Table 4. Indirect Effect of Work Stress in the Relationship Between Transformational Leader and Job Satisfaction

	Effect	Boot SE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
Transformational --> Work Stress --> Job Satisfaction	-0.009	0.017	-0.041	0.025

5. Discussion

The current study examines the impact of transformational leadership on employee job satisfaction. In particular, we explore the mediating role of employee work stress. As hypothesized, we found evidence that if employees consider that their leaders practice a transformational leadership style, they will demonstrate higher job satisfaction. Nevertheless, transformational leadership is not related to work stress. This study reveals that employee stress levels are influenced by other reasons beyond their leader. Thus, work stress does not mediate this construct. It would be inappropriate to reduce stress using an interpersonal approach from the leader. Yet, such an approach can be useful to drive employee satisfaction.

In relation to the relationship of transformational leadership and job satisfaction, the results of the present study are consistent with those of previous studies on this topic. Leaders who practice a transformational leadership style will have a positive influence on employee job satisfaction. The current study also confirms that there is a negative relationship between work stress and job satisfaction. Surprisingly, we found that transformational leadership and work stress do not have any form of relationship. This raises a new perspective that the role of leadership style in managing stress needs to be reviewed. Some employees do not feel that their work stress can be reduced or increased simply because of the leadership style they have experienced. These findings enhance our understanding of the circumstances under which the effects of transformational leadership will be discussed.

Organizations must be aware of the effectiveness of transformational leadership in increasing job satisfaction. We know that employee levels of job satisfaction can contribute to achieving organizations goals. Thus, it makes sense to select and train leaders who can influence, inspire, stimulate, and pay attention to the employee's need. Organizations should implement leadership development programs to cultivate transformational leadership behavior. Other important things to consider to develop higher job satisfaction is

the reduction of employee stress levels. Organizations should provide continuous counselling for employees. Promoting transformational leadership behaviours and providing appropriate ways for employees to raise concerns arising from their employment can be an effective human resources strategy to improve employee experience at work.

6. Conclusion

Only two of the four hypotheses in this study are supported by the results. Transformational leadership does have an effect on job satisfaction in a positive direction, whilst work stress also has an affect on job satisfaction in a negative direction. Since transformational leadership does not influence work stress, work stress does not mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and job satisfaction. This study stands for the proposition that transformational leadership does not always mitigate work stress. Leadership style may help employees to develop but it does not alter their stress levels. As we all understand, some stress is caused by individual characteristics, which cannot be altered by outside influences. In this case, organizations can investigate other options to address employee stress levels.

This study has some limitations. First, this study relies upon cross-sectional data. Second, the study examines organizations in West Java and self-reported surveys only. Hence, future research should implement a longitudinal design which includes data from repeated observations, to obtain greater insight into the causal relationships between constructs through interviews with management, and the use of a greater number of participants from various industries and more provinces in Indonesia.

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