

THE ROLE OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EMPOWERMENT ON WORK ENGAGEMENT

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Abstract - This research was conducted to examine the effect of transformational leadership dan psychological empowerment toward work engagement of IT salesperson. The participants of this research are 208 salesperson. The instruments of study is examined with confirmatory factor analysis. The method is multiple regression. The result shows that transformational leadership and psychological empowerment have significant effect toward work engagement. Based on these results, the role of transformational leadership and increasing psychological empowerment is needed by IT salesperson as a factor that can increase work engagement.

Keywords - Work Engagement, Transformational Leadership, Psychological Empowerment.

I. INTRODUCTION

Work engagement is defined as a positive work-related state of fulfillment that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). Work engagement basically can be influenced by two things, namely job and personal resources. Previous studies in different job settings have shown that job resources are positively related to work engagement (Hakanen, Bakker & Schaufeli, 2006). Together with work resources, personal resources also play the most important determinant of work engagement (Xanthopoulou, Bakker, Demerouti & Schaufeli, 2009). Personal resources may be the function as an adaptation to the work environment while job resources on job characteristics (Hobfoll, 1989).

In a study conducted by Hawkes, Biggs, and Hegerty (2017) shows the role of transformational leadership behavior can create higher work engagement. According to the results of the study, the importance of developing transformational leaders is one of the methods by which organizations can gain competitive advantages.

In addition to transformational leadership as an external resource, work engagement is also thought to be influenced by internal resources. A recent study (Jose & Mampilly, 2014) found that psychological empowerment has a relationship with work engagement. A salesperson who has psychological empowerment has better work performance than a salesperson who do not have psychological empowerment (Wallace, Johnson, Mathe, & Paul, 2011).

There is still few research that explains whether transformational leadership (as a representation of external factors) or psychological empowerment (as a representation of internal factors) which plays as a greater variable on predicting work engagement. Continuing the latest study conducted by Pugar

(2017) said that internal factors play a greater role in predicting work engagement, and another study by Amor et al. (2019) said that external factors play a greater role in predicting work engagement. Based on the difference result, the author wants to prove which one has a bigger role in predicting work engagement.

To explain transformational leadership and psychological empowerment that influences work engagement, the authors use the Conservation Resource Theory (COR) by Hobfoll (1989). This theory explained that when someone has been looking for resources (the resources that exist in him), they will save and maintain these resources. When those resources are threatened even when someone fails to get those resources, it is possible to trigger stress. In resources and work engagement scenarios, COR states that employees who are able to maintain their resources will experience more prosperity and positive feelings so that they are better able to do their work with enthusiasm, dedication, and concentration that leads to increased involvement in the workplace and minimizes work ineffectiveness. Thus, in this theory, resources play an important role in predicting work engagement.

Based on this background, further research is still needed, especially in explaining whether external factors (transformational leadership) or internal factors (psychological empowerment) are more influential on work engagement.

1.1. The role of Transformational Leadership on Work Engagement

Related to transformational leadership, Enwereuzor, Ugwu, and Eze (2016) discuss the results of their research relating to transformational leadership with work engagement. A transformational leader is someone who inspires followers to support organizational goals. Transformational leadership involves the ability of leaders to interact, empathize, and provide support to followers (Bass, 1999). Transformational leaders try to synchronize the

values and attitudes of followers with the collective benefits of the organization, thus creating employees who are not only committed but also focus on achieving a single vision (Bass, 1999; Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Employees who engage do their work because for them work is fun and they are intrinsically motivated (Beek, Hu, Schaufeli, Taris, & Schreurs, 2012). Transformational leaders increase the intrinsic motivation of their employees because they provide an important foundation for the work of their subordinates (Avolio & Yammarino, 2002) by articulating an interesting vision of the future and support for companies that help realize that vision.

In addition, transformational leaders inspire their employees to understand that the collective needs of the organization are above individual needs (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Podsakoff et al., 1990). Regarding sales work, this implies that leaders emphasize how they inspire IT salesperson to provide optimal performance based on their abilities and assign responsibilities that are in line with their skills. In addition, leaders motivate their sales to support each other and learn from the success of other sales to realize shared goals.

From the passage above, sales feel excited, dedicated, and make their work meaningful. In other words, sales who are supported, inspired, and guided by their leaders tend to experience work as more interesting, stimulating, and refreshing, and as a result, become very involved in their work. The point is that with the power of their motivation and inspirational appeal, transformational leaders are expected to have a positive impact on the work engagement of their employees.

H₁: Transformational leadership will be positively related to work engagement.

1.2. The role of Psychological Empowerment on Work Engagement

Employees with high psychological empowerment will also have high work engagement (Wang & Liu, 2013). Employees who interpret the work and believe in the organization's goals are in line with the values believed to increase engagement. Similarly, employees who have high competence and self-confidence will continually challenge themselves in creating higher targets and goals by choosing a more difficult level of work (Luthans, 2008). Psychological empowerment also illustrates that employees have autonomy in doing work (Spreitzer, 1995). Psychological empowerment also makes employees believe that the work they do has an influence on organizational goals, this can increase effectiveness at work (Spreitzer, 1995). This shows that it is

important to have psychological empowerment to increase work engagement in organizations.

H₂: Psychological empowerment will be positively related to work engagement.

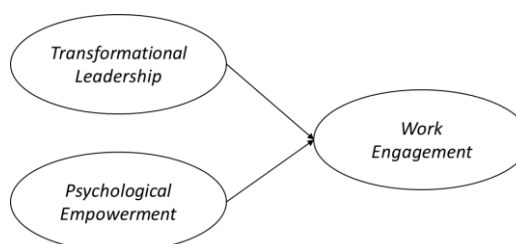


Fig.1. Framework Conceptual

II. METHODS

2.1. Participants

Participants in this study were IT salesperson in Jakarta. Specifically, participants are IT sales who work in IT companies and sell IT products, both hardware and software.

The number of participants amounted to 208 people. The sample includes 83 women (39.9%) and 125 men (60.1%), with a mean age of 29.85 (SD 4.039), ranging from 22 to 36 years. Most participants finished a bachelor degree (48.08%), and had a non-permanent contract (58.4%). On average, participants had 4.3 years of work experience as an IT salesperson, most of them are in staff positions (50%). Most participants spend 5,000,000 – 9,999,999 a month for their daily needs.

The questionnaire consisted of 70 items measuring work engagement, transformational leadership, and psychological empowerment. A total of 345 questionnaires were sent and a total of 208 completed questionnaires were returned, yielding a response rate of 60.29%.

Data is collected by distributing e-form links about these three variables with a sample of IT sales in Jakarta. A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationships between transformational leadership and psychological empowerment to work engagement. The responses from the sample were analyzed using SPSS and SmartPLS software.

2.2. Measures

Work engagement. We adapted the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006). UWES consists of 17 items. This scale captures three dimensions, namely vigor, dedication, and absorption. Participants could answer all statements on a 7-point scale, ranging from 0 (never) to 6 (always/every day). Cronbach's alpha was .857, which means that this instrument is reliable.

Transformational leadership. We adapted Podsakoff (1990) scale to measure transformational leadership, namely Transformational Leadership Inventory (TLI). TLI consists of 23 original items and 10 additional items made by researchers. This scale captures six dimensions, namely identifying and articulating a vision, providing an appropriate model, fostering the acceptance of group goals, high performance expectations, providing individualized support, and intellectual stimulation. Participants indicated their responses on a seven-point scale with anchors (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. It is important to mention that employees had different leaders. Cronbach's alpha was .869.

Psychological empowerment. We adapted Spreitzer (1995) scale to measure Psychological Empowerment Scale (PES). PES consists of 12 original items and 8 additional items made by researchers. This scale captures four dimensions, namely meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. The participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agreed with the statements about their job characteristics at work. A five-point scale from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree was used. Overall, Cronbach's alpha was .928.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Research Results

Hypothesis Testing

The results supported Hypothesis 1; transformational leadership positively related to work engagement. These findings show that IT salesperson who rated their leaders as demonstrating more transformational behaviors were more likely to report feeling engaged at work.

The results supported Hypothesis 2: psychological empowerment positively related to work engagement. Psychological empowerment was positively related to work engagement. The analysis showed that IT salesperson who have a high level of psychological empowerment were more closely related to work engagement.

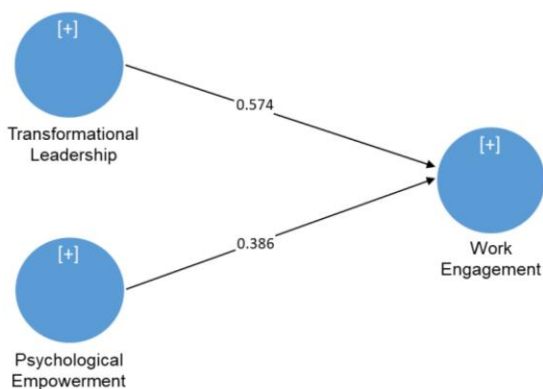


Fig.2. Relationship between transformational leadership and psychological empowerment on work engagement

Variabel	β	p value
Transformational Leadership	.574	.000
Psychological Empowerment	.386	.000

Note. Correlations are based on N = 208; *p < 0,05, **p < 0,01

Table 1 - Multiple regression (Relationship between transformational leadership and psychological empowerment on work engagement)

From the two dimensions tested, both transformational leadership variable ($\beta = 0.574$, $p < 0.05$) and psychological empowerment ($\beta = 0.386$, $p = 0.05$), proved to have a role in work engagement. Based on these results, it can be interpreted that transformational leadership and psychological empowerment contribute to work engagement. That means, the more leader shows transformational leadership style among their team, the more salesperson will feel the role of leaders who leads through inspiration and encouragement to develop creative ways of solving problems. Likewise, the more salesperson has a high psychological empowerment, then he sees the work is meaningful and believes that he can achieve the specified target.

3.2. Discussion

The findings of the current study demonstrated that transformational leadership and psychological empowerment are significant predictors of work engagement. These results are in line with research conducted by Hawkes et al. (2017), which shows the role of transformational leadership behavior can create higher work engagement. Consistent with this research, transformational leadership is related positively to work engagement, and we found that psychological empowerment is also related positively to work engagement ($\beta = .574$).

The results of this study also support the second hypothesis that psychological empowerment has a significant role on work engagement ($\beta = .386$). This supports the results of previous studies conducted by Meng et al. (2019) who find the role of psychological empowerment in predicting work engagement.

Results showed that the role of transformational leadership as a predictor of work engagement is higher than the role of psychological empowerment to work engagement. Therefore, high levels of transformational leadership result in greater feelings, which lead to work engagement. These findings could further help IT sales managers, HR, employees, and organizations utilize these results to develop training programs that increase levels of work engagement.

Limitation

This research has a number of limitations. The main limitation is that we used self-report questionnaires as a single source to measure all factors based on IT salespersons' perceptions. This may lead to the bias associated with the self-administered questionnaire.

The other limitation is that we use online questionnaires so that the control over the respondents is not strong enough. The author suggests to consider the device settings so that 1 participant can only fill the questionnaire one time on one device. Also, this study, it has not been explained if the independent variables were tested for each dimension.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on data analysis conducted by the author, the following conclusion are obtained:

1. Transformational leadership and psychological empowerment positively related to work engagement.
2. The role of transformational leadership is bigger than psychological empowerment on predict work engagement.

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