

The Role of Job Satisfaction in Mediating the Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of job satisfaction in mediating the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police. The study employed a quantitative approach with a population of 115 employees. The sampling technique used was saturation sampling, meaning the entire population was included as the study sample. Research data were collected through the distribution of a questionnaire using a Likert scale and analyzed using the Partial Least Squares–Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) method with the assistance of the SmartPLS 3.0 software. The results indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction, with a path coefficient of 0.417, a t-statistic of 7.450, and a p-value of 0.000. Transformational leadership has a positive but insignificant effect on employee performance, with a path coefficient of 0.095, a t-statistic of 1.633, and a p-value of 0.103. Job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a path coefficient of 0.649, a t-statistic of 11.708, and a p-value of 0.000. Furthermore, transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through job satisfaction, with an indirect effect coefficient of 0.271, a t-statistic of 5.796, and a p-value of 0.000. These findings indicate that job satisfaction acts as a full mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. Thus, efforts to improve employee performance through the implementation of transformational leadership must be accompanied by efforts to enhance employee job satisfaction.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Job Satisfaction, Employee Performance.

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Introduction

Employee performance is one of the key factors determining an organization's success in achieving its established goals. In public sector organizations, employee performance is not only related to the volume of work completed but also encompasses service quality, timeliness, effective use of resources, compliance with procedures, and employees' ability to be accountable for the execution of their duties. Therefore, improving employee performance has become a strategic necessity for every public agency required to provide services that are professional, transparent, accountable, and responsive.

The need for optimal employee performance also applies to the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police. As the organizational unit responsible for human resources management within the police force, the North Sumatra Regional Police HR Bureau plays a crucial role in personnel planning, career development, education and training, performance evaluation, and personnel administration services. The complexity of these tasks requires employees to work with discipline, precision, speed, and professionalism. Furthermore, the North Sumatra Regional Police HR Bureau has received the Presisi Award for applying the principles of integrity, transparency, accountability, and humanity in the 2024 recruitment process for Indonesian National Police (Polri) members. This award underscores the high expectations for continuously maintaining and improving the quality of employee performance.

According to Armstrong (2021), performance is the result of the interaction between an individual's abilities, motivation, and work opportunities in achieving organizational goals. Employee performance can be reflected through the quality of work, quantity of work, timeliness, effectiveness, and autonomy in carrying out tasks. Achieving optimal performance is influenced not only by employees' technical competencies but also by organizational and psychological factors, one of which is leadership. Leaders play a role in providing direction, building morale, creating a supportive work environment, and encouraging employees to achieve higher results.

One leadership style considered relevant to improving employee performance is transformational leadership. Meiryani et al. (2022) explain that transformational leadership is a leadership style that pays attention to the needs and aspirations of subordinates, motivates them to focus on the organization's vision and mission, and encourages them to prioritize the common good over personal interests. Transformational leadership is reflected in a leader's ability to serve as a role model, provide inspiration, encourage innovative thinking, and give individual attention to each employee.

The application of transformational leadership can encourage employees to work beyond the established minimum standards. Leaders who are able to provide a clear vision, set a good example, instill trust, and recognize subordinates' contributions can build employees' commitment to the organization. Under such conditions, employees tend to be more willing to devote their abilities, time, and energy to achieving the organization's goals. Research by Pham et al. (2024) shows that transformational leadership has a positive relationship with employee performance in public sector organizations. These findings indicate that the better transformational leadership is implemented, the more likely employees are to demonstrate improved performance.

Nevertheless, the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance is not always direct. Effective leadership can first foster positive attitudes and feelings among employees toward their work and the organization. One work attitude that has the potential to serve as a bridge between transformational leadership and employee performance is job satisfaction. Job satisfaction reflects employees' evaluations and feelings toward the work they perform and the various aspects associated with that work.

According to Spector (2022), job satisfaction indicates the extent to which an individual likes or dislikes their job and its various aspects, such as the work itself, compensation, supervision, promotion opportunities, and relationships with coworkers. Employees who are

satisfied with their jobs tend to have positive attitudes, higher work motivation, stronger engagement, and a greater willingness to perform their duties well. Conversely, low job satisfaction can dampen morale, hinder cooperation, and reduce employees' willingness to contribute their best to the organization.

Transformational leadership is closely linked to job satisfaction because a leader's behavior is one of the aspects employees evaluate in their work environment. Leaders who are able to provide support, recognition, attention, and opportunities for development can enhance employees' sense of being valued and acknowledged. Transformational leaders also foster open communication and provide employees with the space to develop their skills and share ideas. These conditions can increase employees' comfort at work and ultimately strengthen job satisfaction.

Zuo et al. (2024) demonstrate that transformational leadership has a significant direct influence on job satisfaction. Similar findings were reported by Kaya (2024), who stated that transformational leadership significantly predicts employees' levels of job satisfaction. These research results indicate that leaders who can provide inspiration, set a good example, offer intellectual stimulation, and give individual attention can create a more positive work experience for employees. Thus, the success of transformational leadership can be seen not only in direct improvements in work performance but also in its ability to foster job satisfaction.

Job satisfaction, in turn, can drive improvements in employee performance. Satisfied employees tend to be more responsible in completing tasks, more willing to collaborate, and more motivated to maintain the quality of their work. Gazi et al. (2024) found that job satisfaction has a significant impact on performance, with employees who have higher levels of job satisfaction demonstrating better performance. These findings reinforce the view that job satisfaction is one of the psychological mechanisms that can transform the influence of leadership into tangible work behaviors and outcomes.

Positioning job satisfaction as a mediating variable is crucial because transformational leadership does not necessarily automatically lead to improved performance if employees do not feel satisfied with their work and organizational environment. Leaders can provide a strong vision and direction, but the effectiveness of that direction will be greater if employees feel valued, receive support, have opportunities for growth, and experience fairness within the organization. In this context, transformational leadership enhances job satisfaction, which in turn motivates employees to achieve better performance.

Previous research on the mediating role of job satisfaction continues to show variation. A number of studies have found that job satisfaction can serve as a significant mediator between leadership style and employee performance. However, Kaya's (2024) study indicates that the mediating strength of job satisfaction is not always consistent across all organizational outcomes. These varying findings suggest that the role of job satisfaction as a mediating variable is contextual and can be influenced by organizational characteristics, human resource management systems, patterns of supervisor-subordinate relationships, and job characteristics.

Research gaps are also evident in the organizational contexts examined. Studies on transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance are still predominantly conducted in the education sector, private companies, industry, and public organizations in general. Studies specifically examining the relationship among these three variables within the context of a police human resources bureau remain relatively limited. Yet, police organizations possess distinct characteristics—such as a hierarchical structure, a high level of discipline, strict work procedures, and unique public service responsibilities—that differ from those of other organizations.

Given these conditions, it is important to conduct research on the role of job satisfaction in mediating the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance at the North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau. This study is necessary to determine whether transformational leadership can directly improve employee performance and whether this influence also occurs through increased job satisfaction. The research findings are expected

to provide empirical evidence regarding the role of job satisfaction as a mechanism linking transformational leadership to employee performance.

In practical terms, the research findings can serve as a basis for the North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau in developing a leadership model that is not only oriented toward achieving targets but also takes into account the needs, aspirations, development, and psychological well-being of employees. With increased job satisfaction, employees are expected to demonstrate better quality, quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, and independence in their work. Therefore, this study is titled “The Role of Job Satisfaction in Mediating the Influence of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.”

Literature Review

1. Employee Performance

a) Definition of Employee Performance

According to Armstrong (2021), performance is the result of the interaction between an individual's abilities, motivation, and work opportunities in achieving organizational goals. Thus, performance is not only related to the final outcome of the work but also encompasses the work processes employees undertake to achieve predetermined targets. Consequently, employee performance within public organizations such as the North Sumatra Regional Police also reflects the level of success in carrying out service duties, enforcing the law, and maintaining public safety and order in accordance with applicable professional standards.

b) Employee Performance Indicators

Employee performance indicators (Armstrong, 2021):

1) Work Quality

Work quality describes the level of accuracy, neatness, and conformity of an employee's work results to the standards set by the organization. The higher the quality of work produced, the greater the employee's contribution to achieving the organization's goals.

2) Quantity of Work

Work quantity indicates the amount of work an employee is able to complete within a specific time period in accordance with the targets set by the organization.

3) Timeliness

Timeliness describes an employee's ability to complete work by the deadlines set by the organization.

4) Effectiveness

Effectiveness describes an employee's ability to optimally utilize available resources to achieve the results expected by the organization.

5) Independence

Independence indicates an employee's ability to carry out their duties and responsibilities without relying heavily on instructions or assistance from others.

2. Job Satisfaction

a) Definition of Job Satisfaction

According to Spector (2022), job satisfaction is the extent to which a person likes or dislikes their job and various aspects of that job, such as salary or supervision. Spector also emphasizes that job satisfaction is not only measured by overall satisfaction but also by employees' feelings toward specific aspects of their work.

b) Indicators of Job Satisfaction

According to Robbins and Judge (2022), job satisfaction can be measured through several indicators, namely:

1) The Job Itself

Describes the level of employee satisfaction with the type of work performed, including the fit between the job and the employee's abilities, opportunities to use skills, and the challenges presented by the job.

- 2) Salary or compensation
Reflects employees' level of satisfaction with the compensation they receive, both in terms of the amount and the alignment of compensation with the workload and responsibilities of the job.
- 3) Promotion opportunities
Describes employee satisfaction with career development opportunities, promotions, and opportunities for advancement within the organization.
- 4) Supervisors
Describes employee satisfaction with the support, guidance, attention, and leadership style provided by supervisors in performing their jobs.
- 5) Coworkers
Describes employees' level of satisfaction with social relationships, cooperation, support, and positive interactions with coworkers within the organizational environment.

4. Transformational Leadership

a) Definition of Transformational Leadership

Meiryani et al. (2022) state that transformational leadership is leadership that actively pays attention to the needs and aspirations of followers, then motivates them to focus on the organization's vision and mission, prioritize the common good, and transcend personal interests.

b) Indicators of Transformational Leadership

According to Meiryani et al. (2022), the indicators of transformational leadership are as follows:

- 1) Idealized influence
Demonstrates a leader's ability to serve as a role model, build trust, and inspire subordinates to prioritize shared goals over personal interests.
- 2) Inspirational motivation
Reflects a leader's ability to motivate, instill enthusiasm, and guide subordinates toward the organization's vision and goals.
- 3) Intellectual stimulation
Demonstrates a leader's ability to encourage subordinates to think creatively, innovatively, and boldly, and to view problems from new perspectives.
- 4) Individualized consideration
Demonstrates a leader's personal attention to the needs, aspirations, development, and mentoring of each subordinate.

Conceptual Framework

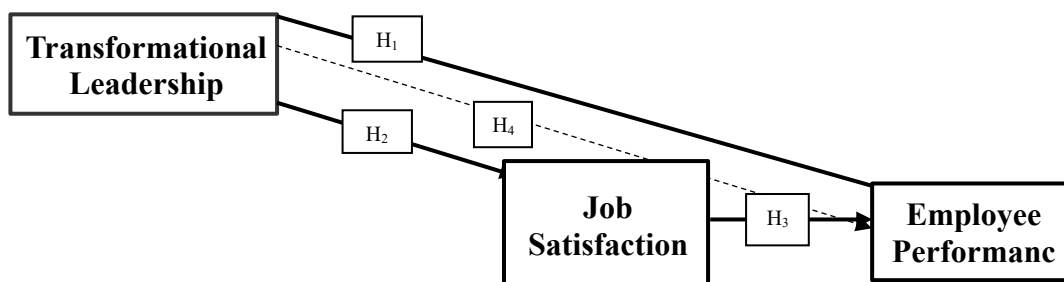


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypotheses

- H₁: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.
- H₂: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.
- H₃: Job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.
- H₆: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through job satisfaction at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.

RESEARCH METHOD

Type of Research

The type of research used is quantitative research. According to Sugiyono (2022), quantitative research is defined as a method grounded in the philosophy of positivism, used to study a specific population or sample; sampling techniques are generally conducted randomly; data collection uses research instruments; and data analysis is quantitative/statistical in nature, with the aim of testing established hypotheses. This quantitative research was conducted to examine the relationship between ethical leadership and organizational culture and employee performance, with organizational commitment serving as an intervening variable, at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.

Research Location and Timeframe

The research was conducted at the North Sumatra Regional Police, located at Jalan Sisingamangaraja Km. 10.5 No. 60, Timbang Deli, Medan Amplas District, Medan City. The research was conducted over a period of 3 months, from May to August 2026.

Population and Sample

According to Sugiyono (2025), the population consists of all objects or subjects possessing specific characteristics defined by the researcher for study, from which conclusions are subsequently drawn. Based on this definition, the population in this study comprises all employees of the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police, totaling 115 individuals.

The sample in this study consists of all employees at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police, totaling 115 people. The sampling technique used is saturation sampling, which involves selecting the entire population as the research sample.

Research Data Sources

The data source used in this study is primary data.

Results

Outer Model Analysis

The *Outer Model* analysis, using the *PLS algorithm*, yielded the following results:

Validity Test

Table 1. Outer Loadings Values

	Transformational Leadership	Job Satisfaction	Employee Performance
X1.1	0.831		
X1.2	0.719		
X1.3	0.858		
X1.4	0.819		
Y.1			0.750
Y.2			0.857
Y.3			0.783
Y.4			0.851

	Transformational Leadership	Job Satisfaction	Employee Performance
Y.5			0.839
Z.1		0.812	
Z.2		0.770	
Z.3		0.909	
Z.4		0.877	
Z.5		0.891	

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Based on the values in Table 1 above, the results of the outer model test using factor loadings/outer loadings show that all indicators for each variable have loadings ≥ 0.60 . This indicates that each indicator is measured validly. Therefore, it can be concluded that all items in the questionnaire meet the validity criteria, as shown in the following figure.

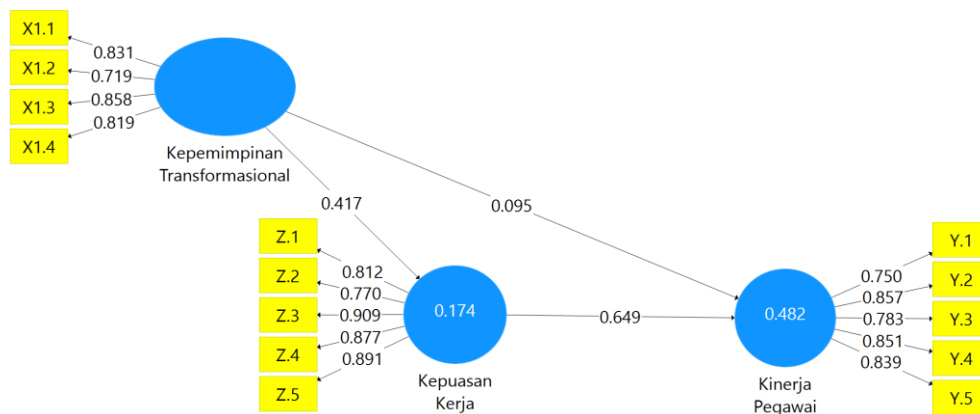


Figure 2. Outer Loadings

Reliability Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Transformational Leadership	0.826	0.849	0.883	0.654
Job Satisfaction	0.906	0.917	0.930	0.728
Employee Performance	0.875	0.880	0.909	0.668
Transformational Leadership	0.826	0.849	0.883	0.654

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

From Table 2 above, the reliability test results show that the Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values for all constructs are above 0.70, and the AVE values are above 0.05. This indicates that all indicators have high internal consistency and are reliable for measuring their respective constructs. Therefore, the research instrument is deemed reliable and suitable for use in structural equation modeling.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

When evaluating a model using PLS, the analysis begins by examining the R-squared value for each latent dependent variable. The table below presents the estimated R-squared values obtained using SmartPLS.

Table 3. R-Square Results

	R-Square	Adjusted R-Square
Job Satisfaction	0.174	0.171

Employee Performance	0.482	0.477
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Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 3 shows the R-squared values for both dependent variables. For the job satisfaction variable, the R-squared value is 0.174; this means that transformational leadership accounts for 0.174, or 17.4%. The remainder is attributed to other variables outside the model. The R-squared value for employee performance is 0.482, meaning that transformational leadership and job satisfaction account for 0.482, or 48.2%; the remainder is attributed to other variables outside the model.

Structural Model Testing (Inner Model)

Hypothesis Testing

Direct Effects Between Variables

Direct effects between variables can be seen in the *path coefficient* values. The data analysis results show that the direct effect values are presented in the following table.

Table 4. *Path Coefficients* (Direct Effects)

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P-Values	Conclusion
Transformational Leadership -> Job Satisfaction	0.417	7.450	0.000	Accepted
Transformational Leadership -> Employee Performance	0.095	1.633	0.103	Rejected
Job Satisfaction -> Employee Performance	0.649	11.708	0.000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Table 4 shows the following direct effect values:

1. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a t-statistic of 7.450 (above 1.96) and a p-value of 0.000 (below 0.05). This means that transformational leadership has a significant effect on employee performance because the significance level is below 0.05. These findings are consistent with previous research, which indicates that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Budi et al., 2026; Asmar et al., 2026).
2. Transformational leadership has a positive but insignificant effect on job satisfaction, with a t-statistic of 1.633 (below 1.96) and a p-value of 0.103 (above 0.05). This means that transformational leadership does not have a significant effect on job satisfaction because the p-value is above 0.05. These findings are inconsistent with those of previous studies, which found that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on job satisfaction (Surya et al., 2026).
3. Job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance, with a t-statistic of 11.708 (above 1.96) and a p-value of 0.000 (below 0.05). This means that job satisfaction has a significant effect on employee performance because the p-value is below 0.05. These findings are consistent with previous research, which also found that job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Nasution & Indrawan, 2026).

Indirect Effects Between Variables

The indirect effects between variables can be seen in the *specific indirect effects* values. The data analysis results show that the indirect effect values are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5. *Specific Indirect Effects*

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Transformational Leadership → Job Satisfaction → Employee Performance	0.271	5.796	0.000	Accepted

Source:
Smart
PLS,
2025

Table 5 shows the indirect effects between variables, namely: transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through job satisfaction, with a t-statistic value of 5.796 (above 1.96) and a significance level of 0.000 (below 0.05). This means that job satisfaction acts as an intervening variable between transformational leadership and employee performance.

Conclusion

1. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.
2. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee job satisfaction at the North Sumatra Regional Police Human Resources Bureau.
3. Job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.
4. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through job satisfaction at the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police.

Recommendations

Based on the research results, the following recommendations can be made:

1. Transformational Leadership
It is recommended that the leadership of the Human Resources Bureau of the North Sumatra Regional Police improve their exemplary behavior, communicate their vision, provide motivation, be open to employees' ideas, and pay attention to the needs and development of each employee.
2. Job Satisfaction
The organization needs to improve job satisfaction through the assignment of tasks based on competencies, fair rewards, transparent promotion opportunities, support from superiors, and harmonious working relationships.
3. Employee Performance
Performance improvement should be achieved through the setting of clear targets, objective performance evaluations, feedback, training, and the use of technology to support quality, timeliness, effectiveness, and work autonomy.
4. The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction
Since job satisfaction mediates the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance, leaders must not only provide direction and set targets but also create work conditions that make employees feel valued, supported, and have opportunities for growth.
5. For Future Researchers
Future researchers are advised to include additional variables, such as work motivation, organizational culture, work environment, organizational commitment, or work discipline. Research could also be expanded to other work units, using larger samples, and employing *mixed-methods* approaches or longitudinal designs.

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