The Role of Transformational Leadership in Driving Performance

Arif Fahmi, Husni Muharram Ritonga

Abstract

This study aims to examine the effect of transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation on employee performance with work discipline as an intervening variable among employees of the Planning Division, Distribution Division, and Commerce and Customer Management Division at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra. This research employed a quantitative approach using a survey method. The sample consisted of 172 employees selected through a saturated sampling technique. Data were collected using questionnaires and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with the Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) approach. The results indicate that transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation have a positive and significant effect on work discipline and employee performance. Furthermore, work discipline has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation on employee performance. These findings suggest that improving employee performance can be achieved by strengthening transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation supported by high levels of work discipline.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Intrinsic Motivation, Work Discipline, Employee Performance.

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Introduction

In this context, the quality of human resources (HR) becomes a determining factor for a company's success in achieving its vision and mission as a provider of reliable, efficient, and sustainable electricity. Employee performance is one of the important aspects that serves as a measure of an organization's success. However, in practice, improving employee performance is inseparable from the role of leadership, work motivation, and the level of employee discipline in carrying out tasks. Therefore, companies need to pay attention to how leadership styles are applied and how intrinsic motivation can be fostered to support the achievement of optimal performance, with work discipline as an important linking factor. Transformational leadership, which emphasizes idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, is seen as the most relevant leadership style for facing the dynamics of modern organizations (Bass & Riggio, 2018). Transformational leaders not only direct employees to achieve targets but are also able to ignite work spirit, a sense of ownership, and awareness of the importance of individual contributions to the organization.

In addition to leadership, intrinsic motivation also plays an important role in driving employee performance. Employees who have high intrinsic motivation tend to show greater dedication, loyalty, and responsibility towards their work without having to rely on external factors such as rewards or financial incentives. Intrinsic motivation can be a primary driving factor in maintaining consistency and quality of performance, even when faced with work pressure and high demands for public service. However, the success of transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation in improving employee performance is also highly influenced by work discipline. Work discipline reflects the level of employee compliance with organizational rules and regulations as well as awareness in carrying out tasks and responsibilities according to established standards (Mangkunegara, 2017). Employees with high discipline will work in an orderly, timely, and responsible manner, so that the work results achieved are more optimal. Work discipline also serves as a bridge connecting motivation and performance, because without discipline, high work spirit does not necessarily produce maximum output. A deep understanding of the influence of transformational leadership and intrinsic motivation on performance through work discipline is expected to provide a theoretical contribution to the development of human resource management science and a practical contribution for PLN management in formulating strategies for more effective and sustainable employee performance improvement.

Problem Formulation

1. Does transformational leadership have a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra?
2. Does intrinsic motivation have a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra?
3. Does transformational leadership have a positive and significant effect on employee work discipline at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra?
4. Does intrinsic motivation have a positive and significant effect on employee work discipline at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra?
5. Does work discipline have a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra?
6. Does transformational leadership have a positive and significant effect on employee performance with work discipline as an intervening variable at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra?
7. Does intrinsic motivation have a positive and significant effect on employee performance with work discipline as an intervening variable at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra?

Research Objectives

1. To test and analyze the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
2. To test and analyze the effect of intrinsic motivation on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
3. To test and analyze the effect of transformational leadership on work discipline at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
4. To test and analyze the effect of intrinsic motivation on work discipline at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
5. To test and analyze the effect of work discipline on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
6. To test and analyze the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance with work discipline as an intervening variable at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
7. To test and analyze the effect of intrinsic motivation on employee performance with work discipline as an intervening variable at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.

Employee Performance

According to Armstrong and Taylor (2019), employee performance is the result of a person's ability, effort, and opportunity in carrying out their duties and responsibilities. Performance encompasses work behavior and results achieved within a certain period according to standards set by the organization. According to Gibson, Ivancevich, Donnelly, and Konopaske (2019), employee performance is the work behavior results of an individual related to the achievement of organizational goals. Performance reflects the real contribution of an employee towards achieving organizational targets, efficiency, and effectiveness.

Transformational Leadership

According to Yukl (2019), transformational leadership is a process in which a leader influences subordinates by creating changes in values, beliefs, and needs, so that employees work beyond personal interests for the sake of the organization's interests.

According to Avolio and Bass (2019), transformational leadership is a leadership style focused on the leader's ability to inspire followers through vision, provide moral encouragement, raise awareness, and develop subordinates' potential to achieve common goals.

Indicators of Transformational Leadership

According to Bass & Avolio (2019), the indicators in this research are as follows:

1. Idealized Influence - the leader becomes a role model and is respected by subordinates.
2. Inspirational Motivation - the leader provides a clear vision and spirit.
3. Intellectual Stimulation - the leader encourages creativity and innovation in subordinates.
4. Individualized Consideration - the leader pays attention to the needs and potential of individual employees.

Intrinsic Motivation

According to Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece (2019), intrinsic motivation is motivation that arises when a person engages in an activity because of personal interest, curiosity, and enjoyment in the learning or working process itself. According to Gagné and Deci (2019), intrinsic motivation is a drive that arises from within an individual to perform an activity because the activity is felt to be enjoyable, challenging, or provides personal satisfaction, not because of external rewards.

Indicators of Intrinsic Motivation

According to Gagné & Deci (2019), indicators of Intrinsic Motivation:

1. Enjoyment at work.
2. Challenge seeking.
3. Personal satisfaction.
4. Autonomy in performing tasks.
5. Growth and learning desire.

Work Discipline

According to Siagian (2019), work discipline is a form of self-control and a person's willingness to obey all provisions set by the organization with full awareness, not due to coercion. According to Sutrisno (2019), work discipline is an attitude of obedience, responsibility, and compliance of a person to work rules and norms applicable in the organization to achieve work effectiveness and efficiency.

Indicators of Work Discipline

According to Sutrisno (2019), indicators of Work Discipline:

1. Compliance with work regulations.
2. Responsibility for assigned tasks.
3. Attendance and punctuality.
4. Obedience to leaders' instructions.
5. Discipline in the use of work time.

Conceptual Framework

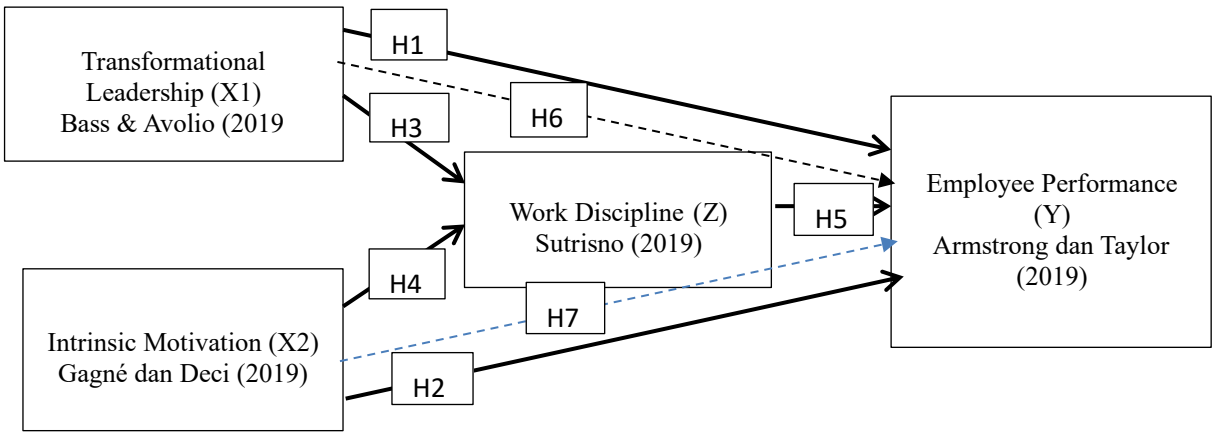


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypotheses

1. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
2. Intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
3. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee work discipline at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
4. Intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee work discipline at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
5. Work discipline has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
6. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with work discipline as an intervening variable at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.

7. Intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with work discipline as an intervening variable at PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.

Type of Research

According to Creswell (2019), quantitative research aims to test objective theories by examining relationships between variables that can be measured using numbers and analyzed statistically. The associative approach is used to determine the relationship and influence between two or more variables.

Research Location and Time

This research was conducted at PT PLN (Persero) Main Distribution Unit of North Sumatra, Jl. KL. Yos Sudarso No.284, Glugur Kota, Medan Barat District, Medan City, North Sumatra 20238 (PLN UID North Sumatra Office), focusing on employees of the Planning Division, Distribution Division, and Commerce and Customer Management Division. The research time was carried out from November to December 2025.

Research Population and Sample

The population in this study were all employees of PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra working in the Planning Division, totaling 172 respondents, the Distribution Division, and the Commerce and Customer Management Division. According to Sugeng et al. (2019), a population is the entire object of the researcher's attention to be studied and used as the basis for drawing conclusions. The sampling technique used was saturated sampling (census sampling), meaning all population members were used as samples because the population number is relatively limited and considered to be representative as a whole (Sekaran & Bougie, 2019). The sample used was 172 respondents.

Data Sources

1. Primary data, obtained directly from respondents through distributing questionnaires to employees of PT PLN (Persero) UID North Sumatra.
2. Secondary data, in the form of employee performance reports, organizational structure data, and other supporting documents from the company.

Data Collection Technique

According to Malhotra (2019), a questionnaire is a data collection technique consisting of a series of questions designed to obtain specific information from respondents. In marketing and organizational research, questionnaires function as the main instrument for obtaining quantitative data that can be analyzed statistically.

Statistical Data Analysis

In statistical data analysis, the SEM PLS method was used. The following are the PLS analysis technique steps:

1. Outer model analysis

a. Convergent validity is the factor loading value of the latent variable with its indicators. The expected value is > 0.7.
b. Discriminant validity is the cross-loading factor value which is useful to see whether the construct has adequate discriminant. This is done by comparing the value of the targeted construct, which must be greater than the values of other constructs.
c. Composite reliability is a measurement; if the reliability value > 0.7, then the construct has a high reliability value.
d. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is the average variance which must be at least 0.5.

e. Cronbach's alpha is a calculation to prove the composite reliability results, where the minimum value is 0.6.

2. Inner model analysis

a. Examining the R-square value for each dependent variable is the initial step of testing using the structural model, also called the inner model. The goal is to observe the size of the correlation between constructs, indicating the level of influence of one variable on another variable in the model. One way to evaluate the influence of a particular independent latent variable on a dependent latent variable is by looking at the change in the R-square value. The analysis of this inner model is if there is no error in multicollinearity where two or more variables have a high correlation, leading to poor model prediction ability (Ghozali et al., 2015). The next step is to perform bootstrapping to determine the estimated value of the path coefficient in the structural model. If the t-statistic > 1.96 for each path relationship (Ghozali et al., 2015).

Hypothesis Testing

According to Hussein (2015), hypothesis testing can be seen from the t-statistic value and the probability value. The criteria for hypothesis testing are:

1. Using the statistic value, for an alpha of 5%, the t-statistic value used is 1.96.
2. The criteria for accepting or rejecting the hypothesis can be described as: if the t-statistic result is > 1.96, the hypothesis is accepted.
3. To reject or accept a hypothesis using probability, it can be assumed that the Hypothesis is accepted if the p-value < 0.05.

Results and Discussion Outer Model Analysis

Measurement model testing (outer model) is used to determine the specification of the relationship between latent variables and their manifest variables. This testing includes convergent validity, discriminant validity, and reliability.

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity of the reflective measurement model can be seen from the correlation between the item/indicator score and its construct score. An individual indicator is considered reliable if it has a correlation value above 0.70.

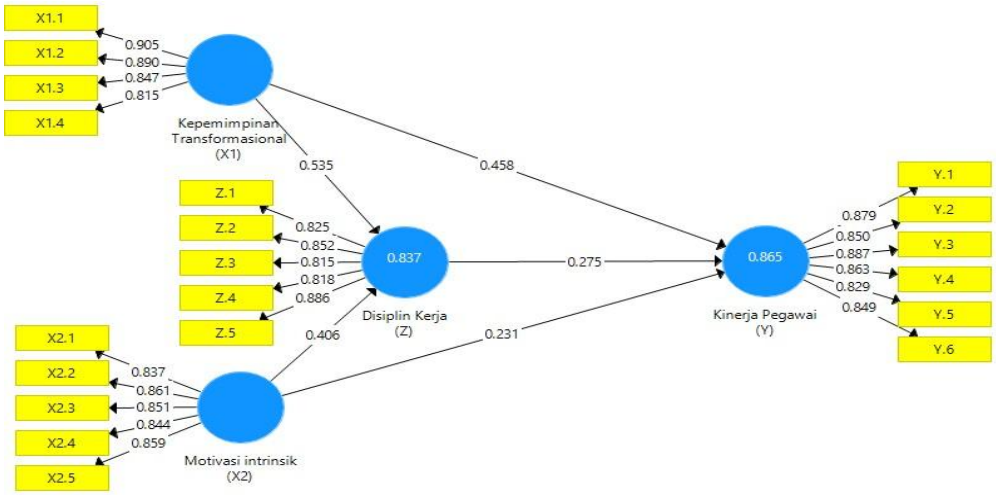


Figure 2. Outer Model

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

Based on the table above, there are outer loading values for each variable and indicator with values greater than 0.7, meaning that in this study, the loading factor of each indicator is

valid, so the research can proceed to the next stage. In this study, there are equations consisting of two substructures: For substructure 1

$Z = b1X1 + b2X2 + e1$

$Z = 0,535 + 0,406 + e1$

For substructure 2

$Y = b3X1 + b4X2 + b5Z + e2$

$Y = 0,458 + 0,231 + 0,275 + e2$

Table 1. Outer Loadings

	Work Discipline_(Z)	Transformational Leadership_(X1)	Employee Performance_(Y)	Intrinsic Motivation (X2)
X1.1		0,905		
X1.2		0,890		
X1.3		0,847		
X1.4		0,815		
X2.1				0,837
X2.2				0,861
X2.3				0,851
X2.4				0,844
X2.5				0,859
Y.1			0,879	
Y.2			0,850	
Y.3			0,887	
Y.4			0,863	
Y.5			0,829	
Y.6			0,849	
Z.1	0,825			
Z.2	0,852			
Z.3	0,815			
Z.4	0,818			
Z.5	0,886			

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

Table 1 shows that all indicators for Transformational Leadership, Intrinsic Motivation, Employee Performance, and Work Discipline have outer loading values above 0.8, indicating each indicator is valid and capable of representing its variable well.

Discriminat Validity

This section will describe the results of the discriminant validity test. The discriminant validity test uses cross-loading values. An indicator is declared to meet discriminant validity if the cross-loading value of the indicator on its variable is the largest compared to other variables. The following are the cross-loading values for each indicator:

Table 2. Discriminant Validity

	Work Discipline_(Z)	Transformational Leadership_(X1)	Employee Performance_(Y)	Intrinsic Motivation (X2)
X1.1	0,825	0,905	0,821	0,807
X1.2	0,788	0,890	0,831	0,776
X1.3	0,750	0,847	0,763	0,713
X1.4	0,733	0,815	0,729	0,784
X2.1	0,732	0,727	0,659	0,837
X2.2	0,756	0,767	0,774	0,861
X2.3	0,747	0,747	0,793	0,851
X2.4	0,784	0,804	0,799	0,844
X2.5	0,725	0,734	0,710	0,859
Y.1	0,867	0,833	0,879	0,817
Y.2	0,686	0,731	0,850	0,701
Y.3	0,765	0,759	0,887	0,728
Y.4	0,735	0,782	0,863	0,762
Y.5	0,725	0,786	0,829	0,726
Y.6	0,792	0,795	0,849	0,800
Z.1	0,825	0,741	0,748	0,784
Z.2	0,852	0,722	0,707	0,798
Z.3	0,815	0,694	0,665	0,690
Z.4	0,818	0,757	0,743	0,667
Z.5	0,886	0,837	0,855	0,760

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

Table 2 shows good discriminant validity, where each indicator has the highest value on its own variable compared to other variables. This indicates that these indicators are able to differentiate and clearly represent their respective variables.

Composite reliability

The next test is the composite reliability of the indicator block measuring the construct. A construct is said to be reliable if the composite reliability value is above 0.60. This can also be seen by looking at the reliability of the construct or latent variable measured by looking at the Cronbach's alpha value of the indicator block measuring the construct. A construct is declared reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value is above 0.7.

Table 3. Construct Reliability and Validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Work Discipline_(Z)	**0,895**	**0,923**	**0,705**
Transformational Leadership_(X1)	**0,887**	**0,922**	**0,748**
Employee Performance_(Y)	**0,929**	**0,944**	**0,739**

Intrinsic Motivation (X2)	**0,904**	**0,929**	**0,723**

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

Table 3 shows that all variables have good reliability and validity, indicated by Cronbach's Alpha and composite reliability values above 0.7 and AVE values above 0.5. This indicates that the research instrument is consistent and able to explain the measured variables validly.

Inner Model Analysis

Evaluation of the structural model (inner model) is carried out to ensure that the built structural model is robust and accurate. The analysis stages in evaluating the structural model are seen from several indicators, namely:

Coefficient of Determination (R2)

Based on data processing using SmartPLS 3.3.3, the following R Square values were obtained:

Table 4. R Square Results

	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Work Discipline_(Z)	0,837	0,835
Employee Performance_(Y)	0,865	0,863

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

Table 4 shows that the R Square value for Work Discipline (Z) is 0.837, meaning the independent variables can explain 83.7% of the variation in Work Discipline, while the rest is influenced by other factors outside the model. Meanwhile, the R Square for Employee Performance (Y) of 0.865 shows that 86.5% of the variation in Employee Performance can be explained by the variables in the research model, indicating the model has strong explanatory ability.

Hypothesis Testing

After assessing the inner model, the next step is to evaluate the relationships between latent constructs as hypothesized in this study. Hypothesis testing in this study is done by looking at T-Statistics and P-Values. A hypothesis is declared accepted if the T-Statistics value > 1.96 and P-Values < 0.05. The following are the results of Path Coefficients for direct effects:

Table 5. Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

	Original Sample(O)	T Statistics (| O/STDEV |)	P Values	Results
Work Discipline_(Z) -> Employee Performance_(Y)	0,275	3,696	**0,000**	**Accepted**
Transformational Leadership_(X1) -> Work Discipline_(Z)	0,535	7,925	**0,000**	**Accepted**
Transformational Leadership_(X1) -> Employee Performance_(Y)	0,458	5,300	**0,000**	**Accepted**
Intrinsic Motivation (X2) -> Work Discipline_(Z)	0,406	6,027	**0,000**	**Accepted**

Intrinsic Motivation (X2) -> Employee Performance_(Y)	0,231	3,329	**0,000**	**Accepted**

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3

1. Work Discipline (Z) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y), with a coefficient value of 0.275, T-statistic 3.696, and p-value 0.000. This shows that the better the work discipline, the more employee performance will increase.
2. Transformational Leadership (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Work Discipline (Z), indicated by a coefficient of 0.535, T-statistic 7.925, and p-value 0.000. This means that the implementation of good transformational leadership is able to improve employee work discipline.
3. Transformational Leadership (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y), with a coefficient of 0.458, T-statistic 5.300, and p-value 0.000. This indicates that transformational leadership directly contributes to improving employee performance.
4. Intrinsic Motivation (X2) has a positive and significant effect on Work Discipline (Z), with a coefficient value of 0.406, T-statistic 6.027, and p-value 0.000. This means the higher the employee's intrinsic motivation, the higher the level of work discipline.
5. Intrinsic Motivation (X2) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y), indicated by a coefficient of 0.231, T-statistic 3.329, and p-value 0.000. Thus, high intrinsic motivation encourages improved employee performance.

Table 6. Path Coefficients (Indirect Effects)

	Original Sample (O)	**T Statistics (| O/STDEV |)**	**P Values**	**Results**
Transformational Leadership_(X1) -> Work Discipline_(Z) -> Employee Performance_(Y)	0,147	3,286	**0,001**	**Accepted**
Intrinsic Motivation (X2) -> Work Discipline_(Z) -> Employee Performance_(Y)	0,112	3,114	**0,001**	**Accepted**

Source : Smart PLS 3.3.3]

6. Transformational Leadership (X1) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y) through Work Discipline (Z), with a coefficient value of 0.147, T-statistic 3.286, and p-value 0.001. This shows that work discipline is able to mediate the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance.
7. Intrinsic Motivation (X2) has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance (Y) through Work Discipline (Z), indicated by a coefficient of 0.112, T-statistic 3.114, and pvalue 0.001. Thus, work discipline acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between intrinsic motivation and employee performance.

Conclusion

1. Work discipline has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This shows that an increase in employee discipline will be followed by an increase in performance in carrying out their duties and responsibilities.

2. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work discipline. This means that leaders who are able to provide role models, motivation, and inspiration can encourage employees to work more disciplined.
3. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This confirms that a transformational leadership style is directly able to improve employee performance.
4. Intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on work discipline. The higher the motivation from within the employee, the better the level of work discipline shown.
5. Intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This condition indicates that the internal drive of employees is an important factor in improving performance.
6. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work discipline. This proves that work discipline is able to mediate the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance.
7. Intrinsic motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work discipline. Thus, work discipline acts as a mediating variable in the relationship between intrinsic motivation and employee performance.

Suggestions

1. Organizational leaders are advised to consistently apply transformational leadership by providing a clear vision, exemplary behavior, and support and motivation to employees in order to improve work discipline and performance.
2. Organizations need to strengthen the work discipline system by establishing clear rules, consistent supervision, and fair provision of rewards and sanctions so that employees are encouraged to work more orderly and responsibly.
3. Management is advised to increase employee intrinsic motivation by creating a conducive work environment, providing opportunities for self-development, and recognition for work achievements, so that employee performance can continue to be improved.
4. Subsequent research is suggested to develop the conceptual model by adding other variables such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational culture, or work environment to enrich the study of human resource management theory.
5. Future research is also suggested to test this model in different sectors or organizations to obtain a broader generalization of findings.

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