The Role of Work Motivation in Mediating the Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance at the National Narcotics Agency of North Sumatra Province

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Abstract

Employee performance is a strategic factor in supporting the success of public sector organizations, particularly the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency (BNN), which faces complex law enforcement and community service tasks. This study aims to analyze the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance with work motivation as a mediating variable at the North Sumatra Provincial BNN. This study uses a quantitative approach with a survey method. The population and sample of this study are all 84 employees of the North Sumatra Provincial BNN. Data were collected through questionnaires and analyzed using the Partial Least Square (PLS) method with the help of SmartPLS software. The results show that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance and work motivation. Work motivation is also proven to have a positive and significant effect on employee performance. In addition, work motivation is able to significantly mediate the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance. These findings indicate that the application of effective transformational leadership can improve employee performance directly and indirectly through increased work motivation. This study concludes that work motivation plays a strategic role in strengthening the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance. Therefore, the North Sumatra Provincial Narcotics Agency is advised to optimize the application of transformational leadership that encourages motivation, creativity, and employee competency development in order to improve performance in a sustainable manner.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Work Motivation, Employee Performance

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Introduction

Employee performance is a key element in determining the effectiveness and success of public sector organizations, especially agencies that have strategic responsibilities in service and law enforcement such as the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency (BNN). The North Sumatra Provincial Narcotics Agency faces increasingly complex challenges as the circulation and abuse of narcotics increases, drug crime methods evolve, and the demand for rehabilitation and prevention services rises. These conditions require employees to perform optimally, professionally, and with a focus on results.

In the context of human resource management, employee performance is not only determined by technical abilities but is also influenced by leadership factors. Transformational leadership is viewed as a leadership style that can inspire, motivate, and encourage employees to work beyond the standards set by the organization. Robbins and Judge (2020) state that transformational leadership plays an important role in shaping employee attitudes, behavior, and commitment through a clear vision, exemplary behavior, and support for individual development. In organizations such as the BNN, the role of leaders who are able to provide direction, exemplary behavior, and motivation is crucial in maintaining employee morale amid high work pressure.

However, the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance is not always direct. One important factor that strengthens this relationship is work motivation. Work motivation is an internal and external drive that makes employees willing to exert their best abilities and efforts in completing their work. According to Vo et al. (2022), work motivation is related to the fulfillment of the need for competence, autonomy, and social connectedness, which ultimately has an impact on work quality and productivity. Employees with high work motivation tend to perform better, show initiative, and are able to deal with work pressure positively.

At the North Sumatra Provincial Narcotics Agency, there are still indications that the level of employee work motivation is not yet fully optimal, including perceptions of the suitability of competencies to job demands, the drive to innovate, and high work pressure. This condition has the potential to affect the effectiveness of transformational leadership in improving employee performance. Therefore, work motivation is seen as an important variable that can bridge the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance.

Previous studies have shown that work motivation plays a strategic role as a mediating variable. Lukito (2025) found that transformational leadership can significantly improve employee performance through increased work motivation. Similar findings were also reported by Rahman et al. (2023), who stated that leaders who are able to inspire and provide psychological support will increase employee motivation, which in turn will have an impact on performance. However, empirical studies that specifically examine the role of work motivation as a mediator between transformational leadership and employee performance in law enforcement agencies such as the BNN, especially at the provincial level, are still relatively limited.

Based on this description, research entitled "The Role of Work Motivation in Mediating the Influence of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency" is important to conduct. This study is expected to contribute theoretically to the development of public sector human resource management studies and provide practical recommendations for the leadership of the North Sumatra Provincial BNN in improving employee performance through the strengthening of transformational leadership and work motivation on an ongoing basis.

Literature Review Theoretical Framework Employee Performance

Definition of Employee Performance

According to Robbins & Judge (2020), employee performance can be defined as behavior that contributes to the achievement of organizational goals, which is usually measured based on the achievement of results desired by the organization or company.

Factors that influence employee performance

Factors that Influence Employee Performance according to Robbins & Judge (2020):

1) Ability: The skills, knowledge, and competencies possessed by employees to carry out their duties.
2) Motivation: The drive to work to the best of one's ability, whether from internal or external factors.
3) Work Environment: The physical and social conditions in the workplace that support or hinder performance.
4) Leadership: The leadership style applied by superiors can improve or reduce employee performance.
5) Compensation: Rewards or recognition received by employees for their performance.

Employee Performance Indicators

According to Robbins & Judge (2020) in their book "Organizational Behavior," employee performance indicators are measures used to assess the extent to which employees are successful in carrying out their duties and meeting organizational goals. Employee performance can be evaluated based on several indicators that cover the following aspects:

1) Quality of Work
   Measures the extent to which the work produced meets established standards, is free from errors, and meets desired quality expectations.
2) Quantity of Work
   Measures the amount of work completed within a certain period of time. This relates to the productivity or output generated by employees.
3) Timeliness
   Measuring employees' ability to complete work according to set deadlines. Punctuality is very important in improving organizational efficiency.
4) Initiative
   Measures the extent to which employees are able to show initiative in completing tasks without having to wait for instructions from their superiors. This includes the ability to make decisions and act proactively.
5) Teamwork
   Measures employees' ability to work with others in a team, as well as their contribution to the achievement of team and overall organizational goals.
6) Communication
   Measuring the extent to which employees are able to communicate clearly and effectively, both in conveying information and in listening and responding to ideas or issues.
7) Creativity and Innovation
   Measuring the extent to which employees are able to generate new ideas, creative solutions, and innovative approaches in completing tasks or facing challenges in the workplace.

Work Motivation Definition of Work Motivation

According to Vo et al., 2022, work motivation is a drive that stems from individual needs (competence, autonomy, social relationships) that encourage productive and effective individual work behavior.

Indicators of Work Motivation

The indicators of work motivation according to Vo et al., 2022 are as follows:

1) Competence
   Refers to an individual's ability to perform tasks well and feel capable of mastering their work. In this study, competence is measured through "highest level of education achieved" as a proxy.
2) Autonomy
   Refers to individual freedom and control over how they perform their work — that is, the ability to make their own decisions and have choices in their work.
3) Social connectedness
   Refers to the individual's need to feel connected, accepted, and have positive relationships with others in the work environment, for example, feeling that they belong to a group, are supported by coworkers, and have a sense of social belonging.

Leadership Transformational Definition of Transformational Leadership

Robbins & Judge (2020) define transformational leadership as a leadership style that is capable of bringing about major changes in an organization by influencing the values, perceptions, and aspirations of subordinates to align with the leader's vision.

Indicators of Transformational Leadership

According to Robbins and Judge (2020), the indicators of transformational leadership include four main dimensions:

1) Idealized Influence:
   Leaders act as role models who are respected and trusted by their followers, and demonstrate ethical behavior and high moral principles.
2) Inspirational Motivation:
   Leaders convey a clear vision and mission, and motivate their followers to achieve common goals with enthusiasm and optimism.
3) Intellectual Stimulation:
   Leaders encourage creativity and innovation, and invite their followers to think critically and seek new solutions to the problems they face.
4) Individualized Consideration:
   Leaders pay special attention to the needs and potential of each follower, and act as mentors or coaches in their personal development.

Conceptual Framework

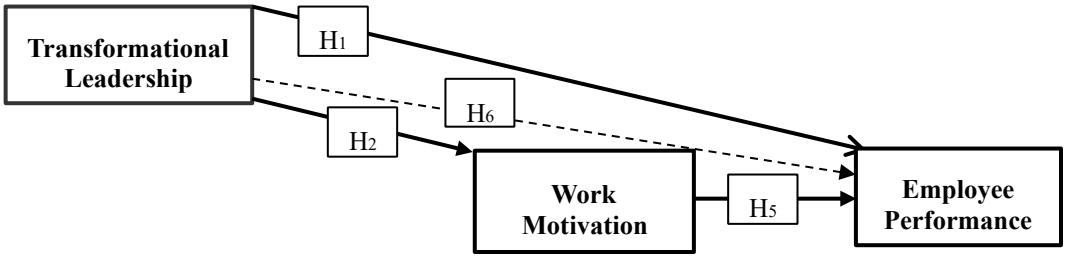

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

Research Hypothesis

H_1 : Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency .

H_2: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency.

H_3: Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency.

H_4: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency.

Research Methodology Type of Research

The type of research used by the researcher is quantitative research. According to Sugiyono (2022), quantitative research can be defined as a method based on positivism philosophy, used to study a specific population or sample, with sampling techniques generally conducted randomly, data collection using research instruments, and quantitative/statistical data analysis with the aim of testing predetermined hypotheses. This type of quantitative research was conducted to create a study aimed at adjusting a study and analyzing transformational leadership and work environment on employee performance with work motivation as a mediating variable at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency.

Research Location and Time

The research was conducted at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency, located at Jl. Balai Pom No.1 Blok A, Medan Estate, Percut Sei Tuan, Deli Serdang Regency, North Sumatra. The research was conducted over a period of 3 months, from October to December 2025.

Population and Sample

Sugiyono (2021) defines population as a generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics determined by researchers to be studied and then concluded. The population and sample in this study were all permanent employees of the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency. The number of employees at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency was 84, with details as follows: 53 civil servants, 8 PPPK employees, and 23 honorary employees. In this study, the sample consisted of all 84 employees.

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

	Employee Performance	Job Motivation	Transformational Leadership
X1.1			0.858
X1.2			0.887
X1.3			0.834
X1.4			0.836
Y.1	0.739		
Y.2	0.735		
Y.3	0.810		
Y.4	0.875		
Y.5	0.893		
Y.6	0.836		

	Employee Performance	Job Motivation	Transformational Leadership
Y.7	0.720		
Z.1		0.870	
Z.2		0.869	
Z.3		0.866	

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

Based on the values in Table 1 above, which show the results of outer model testing through loading factor/outer loadings values, all indicators in each variable have a loading value ≥ 0.70. This indicates that each indicator is measured validly and strongly. Therefore, it can be concluded that all items in the questionnaire have met the validity criteria, as shown in the following figure.

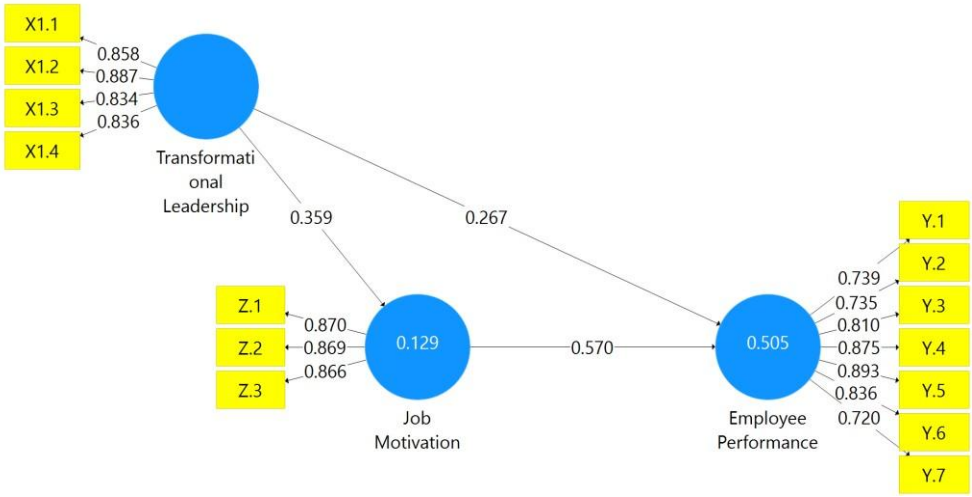

Figure 2. Outer Loading

Reliability Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Employee Performance	0.908	0.922	0.927	0.646
Job Motivation	0.837	0.838	0.902	0.754
Transformational Leadership	0.876	0.881	0.915	0.729

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. This indicates that all indicators have high internal consistency and are reliable in measuring their respective constructs. Thus, the research instrument is declared reliable and suitable for use in structural model testing.

Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

In assessing the model with PLS, we begin by looking at the R-square for each dependent latent variable. The table below shows the Rsquare estimation results using SmartPLS.

Table 3. R Square Results

	R Square	Adjusted R-Square
Job Motivation	0.129	0.118
Employee Performance	0.505	0.493

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 3 shows the R square values for both dependent variables. For the work motivation variable, the R square value is 0.129, meaning that the influence of transformational leadership is 0.129 or 12.9%, with the remainder attributable to other variables outside the model. The Rsquare value for employee performance is 0.505, meaning that transformational leadership and work motivation account for 0.505 or 50.5%, with the remainder attributable to other variables outside the model.

Structural Model Testing (Inner Model) Hypothesis Testing Direct Influence Between Variables

The direct effect between variables can be seen in the path coefficients. The data analysis results show the direct effect values in the following table.

Table 4. Path Coefficients (Direct Effects)

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Transformational Leadership -> Employee Performance	0.267	2.949	0.003	Accepted
Transformational Leadership -> Job Motivation	0.359	4.048	0.000	Accepted
Job Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.570	6,957	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 value of 2.949 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.003 below 0.05, meaning that transformational leadership has a real effect on employee performance because the significance value is above 0.05 . The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Rahman et al., 2023; Fadillah & Mesra, 2024).
2. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation with a t-statistic value of 4.048 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that transformational leadership has a significant effect on work motivation because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous studies, namely that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation (Fadillah & Mesra, 2023).
3. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance with a tstatistic value of 6.957 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation has a real effect on employee performance because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are consistent with previous studies, which found that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance (Dwipayana et al., 2023; Siahaan et al., 2025).

Indirect Influence Between Variables

The indirect effect between variables can be seen in the specific indirect effects value. The data analysis results show the indirect effect value in Table 5 below. **Table 5.** Specific Indirect Effects

	Original Sample	T Statistics	P Values	Conclusion
Transformational Leadership -> Job Motivation -> Employee Performance	0.205	3.426	0.001	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 5 shows the indirect influence between variables, namely: transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation with a t-statistic value of 3.426 above 1.96 and a significance value of 0.001 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation acts as an intervening variable between leadership and employee performance.

Conclusion

1. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency.
2. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency.
3. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee performance at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency.
4. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance through work motivation at the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency.

Recommendations

1. Employee performance with the lowest score was "I am able to generate new ideas or ways to improve work effectiveness." Therefore, the recommendation is that the North Sumatra Provincial National Narcotics Agency should encourage an innovative work climate through transformational leadership that provides space for ideas, creative discussion forums, and recognition of employee initiatives, so that work motivation and employee performance can improve continuously.
2. Work motivation with the lowest value statement "I am motivated to work because I feel that I have the skills required for the job." The North Sumatra Provincial Narcotics Agency is advised to improve the alignment of employee competencies with job requirements through continuous training, coaching, and appropriate job placement so that employee motivation and performance can improve.
3. Transformational leadership with the lowest score: "My leaders encourage me to think creatively and find new solutions at work." The North Sumatra Provincial Narcotics Agency is advised to implement more inspiring transformational leadership by encouraging creativity, opening up space for discussion of ideas, and providing support and constructive feedback so that employees are encouraged to find new solutions at work.

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