

The Role of Work Motivation in Mediating the Influence of The Transformational Leadership Style of Sub-District Heads on The Performance of Neighborhood Heads at the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the role of work motivation in mediating the influence of sub-district head transformational leadership on neighborhood head performance at the Medan Baru Sub-district Office in Medan City. The background of this study is based on differences in performance among neighborhood heads, which are influenced by leadership, motivation, and working conditions. Transformational leadership is considered capable of creating positive change through the leader's ability to inspire, stimulate intellectually, and give individual attention to subordinates. Meanwhile, work motivation is seen as a psychological force that drives individuals to achieve and contribute optimally to the organization. This study used a quantitative approach with a population of 64 neighborhood heads in Medan Baru District, all of whom were included in the saturated sample. Data analysis techniques used Partial Least Squares (PLS) through the SmartPLS 4.0 application. The results showed that transformational leadership had a positive but insignificant effect on the performance of neighborhood heads, but had a positive and significant effect on work motivation. Furthermore, work motivation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of neighborhood heads and is proven to mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and performance. The coefficient of determination (R^2) value shows that 64.8% of the variation in work motivation and 94.8% of the variation in performance can be explained by the research model. These results indicate that improving the performance of neighborhood heads does not only depend on the transformational leadership style applied by the sub-district head, but is also greatly influenced by the level of individual work motivation. Therefore, a leadership strategy that focuses on empowerment, individual attention, and the provision of continuous rewards and guidance is needed to improve the motivation and performance of officials in the Medan Baru Sub-district.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Work Motivation, Environmental Manager Performance

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Introduction

In the regional government system, sub-district heads play a strategic role as regional leaders responsible for coordinating the implementation of government affairs, development, and public services at the sub-district level. The success of sub-district heads in carrying out these functions greatly depends on their ability to lead and motivate their subordinates, including neighborhood heads who serve as the spearhead of public services at the lowest level. Neighborhood heads are the direct intermediaries between the community and the government, so their performance greatly determines the image and effectiveness of public services in the sub-district (Rahman & Lataruva, 2023).

However, in practice, there are still differences in performance among neighborhood heads in the Medan Baru Subdistrict. Some neighborhood heads show high work enthusiasm and are able to perform their duties well, while others still face obstacles such as low work motivation, lack of support from superiors, and limitations in the work environment. This phenomenon shows that the performance of neighborhood heads is not only influenced by individual competence, but also by the leadership style of the subdistrict head as their direct superior, who plays a role in providing direction, guidance, and motivation to their subordinates (Fadillah & Mesra, 2023).

Transformational leadership style is one of the leadership models that is considered effective in improving employee performance. Bass and Riggio (2020) explain that transformational leadership includes the leader's ability to inspire followers, exert ideal influence, stimulate intellectually, and provide individual attention. Transformational leaders are not only oriented towards achieving organizational goals, but also strive to develop the potential and commitment of the individuals they lead. In the context of local government, sub-district heads who apply a transformational leadership style can create a positive work climate, increase enthusiasm for public service, and foster subordinates' commitment to their responsibilities (Yusup & Maulani, 2023).

In addition to leadership style, work motivation is also an important factor that influences employee performance. According to Robbins and Judge (2022), motivation is a psychological force that directs a person to behave in order to achieve certain goals. Employees with high motivation tend to work more efficiently, be more disciplined, and have a high sense of responsibility for their work results. Research by Supriadi and Suyanto (2023) shows that work motivation acts as a mediating variable that connects leadership style with employee performance. This means that effective leadership will have a stronger impact on performance if employees have a high level of work motivation.

In the context of the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office, the subdistrict head is expected to be a leader who not only gives administrative orders but also inspires, guides, and gives personal attention to neighborhood heads. Consistently applied transformational leadership will strengthen work motivation through performance rewards, moral support, and opportunities for self-development (Tarigan & Anwar, 2024). With increased work motivation, neighborhood heads will be encouraged to work proactively, responsibly, and innovatively in providing services to the community.

Based on the above description, it can be concluded that work motivation acts as a bridge connecting the sub-district head's transformational leadership style with the improvement of neighborhood chief performance. Therefore, this study is important to analyze the role of work motivation in mediating the influence of the sub-district head's transformational leadership style on the performance of neighborhood chiefs at the Medan Baru Sub-district Office in Medan City. The results of this study are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of human resource management science in the public sector and provide practical recommendations for local governments in improving the quality of public services through effective leadership and high work motivation.

Literature Review

2.1 Performance

According to Rahman & Lataruva (2023), employee performance is defined as the extent to which an employee is able to achieve expected results or meet established standards in the context of their work. Measurements include productivity, work quality, compliance with policies, creativity, initiative, attendance, and contribution to the achievement of organizational goals.

2.2 Factors Affecting Performance

Factors Affecting Performance According to Rahman & Lataruva (2023):

1. Leadership Style

The leadership style of superiors, especially those that are participatory, transformational, or supportive, greatly influences the enthusiasm, direction, and performance of subordinates.

2. Work Motivation

The level of motivation from within (intrinsic) and from outside (extrinsic) that drives a person to achieve work goals. High motivation can drive optimal performance.

3. Competence (Abilities & Skills)

The knowledge, expertise, and work experience possessed by employees greatly determine the quality and productivity of their work.

4. Work Environment

Both physical and non-physical aspects: workplace comfort, employee relationships, organizational culture, and the overall work climate.

5. Work Discipline

The level of employee compliance with rules, procedures, and work ethics. High discipline directly contributes to good performance.

6. Reward and Incentive System

Financial and non-financial compensation (recognition, promotion, bonuses) that encourages employees to work to their full potential.

7. Job Satisfaction

The level of satisfaction with work, superiors, facilities, and opportunities for self-development also affects the consistency and quality of performance.

2.3 Performance Indicators

Performance Indicators according to Rahman & Lataruva (2023):

1. Work Quantity

The amount of output or work completed within a certain period of time in accordance with the set targets.

2. Work Quality

The level of precision, accuracy, and correctness of work results compared to applicable standards.

3. Timeliness

The ability to complete work within the specified time limit and work time efficiency.

4. Attendance and Discipline

Level of attendance and discipline in following work schedules, including compliance with organizational rules.

5. Cooperation with Colleagues

Ability to work in a team, good communication, and active participation in completing joint tasks.

6. Initiative and Responsibility

A tendency to take action or find solutions without waiting for instructions, as well as awareness of job responsibilities.

7. Understanding of Tasks and Implementation of Procedures

To what extent employees understand their tasks and perform their work in accordance with applicable procedures and instructions.

2.4 Work Motivation

Bahasoan & Baharuddin (2023) define work motivation as an internal drive to work harder, be more disciplined, and be more productive to achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently. It is emphasized that motivation is closely related to attitude and commitment to work, as well as performance.

2.5 Factors Influencing Work Motivation

Based on the findings of Bahasoan & Baharuddin (2023), there are three main groups of factors that influence employee work motivation:

1. Work Discipline

Employee compliance with organizational rules, ethics, time, and procedures. This discipline reflects a professional attitude that supports internal motivation and positive work behavior.

2. Workload

The level of tasks assigned to employees, both in terms of quantity and complexity. A balanced and reasonable workload can increase motivation, while an excessive workload or poor task management can reduce work enthusiasm.

3. Organizational Environment and Management Support

Includes fair treatment, job security, commensurate compensation, recognition of achievements, and policies that facilitate employees. These conditions create a work atmosphere that supports sustained work motivation.

2.6 Work Motivation Indicators

Work Motivation Indicators according to Bahasoan & Baharuddin (2023):

1. Work Engagement

Refers to the extent to which employees feel emotionally, cognitively, and physically involved in their work.

2. Intensity of Effort / Hard Work

Describes the extent to which employees demonstrate maximum effort in carrying out their duties.

3. Job Satisfaction

The level of emotional satisfaction employees feel towards their work, facilities, and working conditions.

4. Employee Retention

Measures employees' intentions and desire to remain working in the organization for the long term.

2.7 Transformational Leadership

Yukl (2020) defines transformational leadership as a process in which leaders change or transform the values, attitudes, and goals of organizational members by providing ideal influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual attention.

2.8 Factors that influence Transformational Leadership

Factors influencing transformational leadership according to Yukl (2020):

1. Leader Characteristics

Refers to the personal traits and competencies of leaders that support their ability to inspire and influence.

2. Follower Characteristics

The psychological conditions and background of followers also determine the effectiveness of transformational leadership.

3. Organizational Context

Organizational structure and work culture will determine the extent to which transformational practices can develop.

4. External Environmental Conditions

The environment outside the organization, such as market dynamics or technological changes, drives the need for transformational leadership styles.

2.9 Indicators of Transformational Leadership

Indicators of transformational leadership according to Yukl (2020):

1. Developing and Communicating a Vision

Transformational leaders create and communicate a clear and inspiring vision of the organization's future to their followers.

2. Encouraging Innovation and Learning

Leaders encourage followers to think creatively, question old habits, and continue learning for continuous improvement.

3. Providing Individual Support

Leaders pay attention to the needs, potential, and unique characteristics of each team member on a personal level.

4. Setting an Example in Values and Ethics

Leaders set an example in integrity, responsibility, and professional conduct.

5. Inspiring Enthusiasm and Motivation

Leaders inspire, give hope, and build confidence in their teams to work beyond the usual standards.

2.10 Conceptual Framework

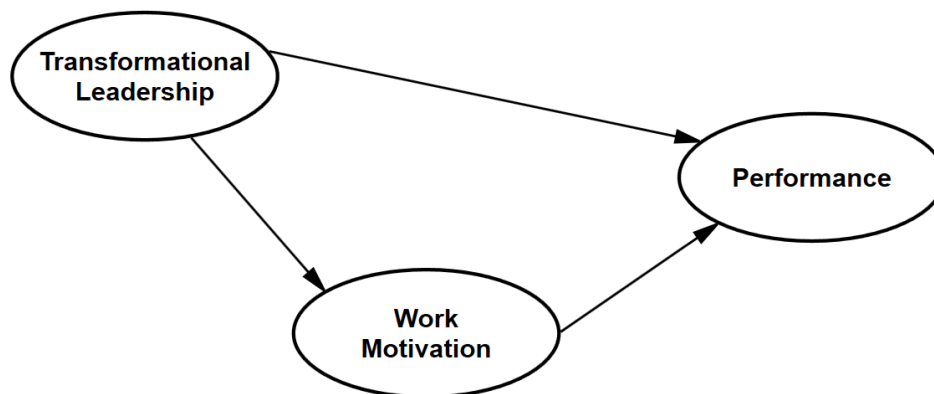


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

2.11 Research Hypothesis

H₁ : Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the performance of neighborhood heads at the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office in Medan City.

H₂: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the work motivation of neighborhood chiefs at the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office in Medan City.

H₃: Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of neighborhood heads at the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office in Medan City.

H₄ : Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the performance of neighborhood heads through work motivation at the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office in Medan City.

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 the transformational leadership style of the sub-district head and the work environment on the performance of the neighborhood head with work motivation as an intervening variable at the Medan Baru Sub-district Office in Medan City.

Research Location and Time

The research location was at the Medan Baru Sub-District Office, located at Jl. Rebab No.34, Titi Rantai, Kec. Medan Baru, Medan City, North Sumatra. The research was conducted over a period of 3 months, from August to November 2025.

Population and Sample

According to Sugiyono (2022), a population is a generalization area consisting of objects or subjects that have certain qualities and characteristics determined by researchers to be studied, and then conclusions are drawn. In this study, the population consists of 64 neighborhood heads in the Medan Baru subdistrict. Because the population is small, i.e., less than one hundred, the entire population was used as the sample, which is better known as a saturated sample.

Research Data Sources

The data source used in this study is primary data.

Results

Outer Model Analysis

Outer Model Analysis using the PLS Algorithm produced the following results:

Validity Test

Table 1. Outer Loadings Values

	Performance	Transformational Leadership	Work Motivation
X1.1		0.939	
X1.2		0.903	
X1.3		0.806	
X1.4		0.955	
Y.1	0.809		
Y.2	0.835		
Y.3	0.867		
Y.4	0.873		
Y.5	0.871		
Y.6	0.739		
Y.7	0.832		
Z.1			0.850
Z.2			0.896
Z.3			0.832
Z.4			0.860

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.

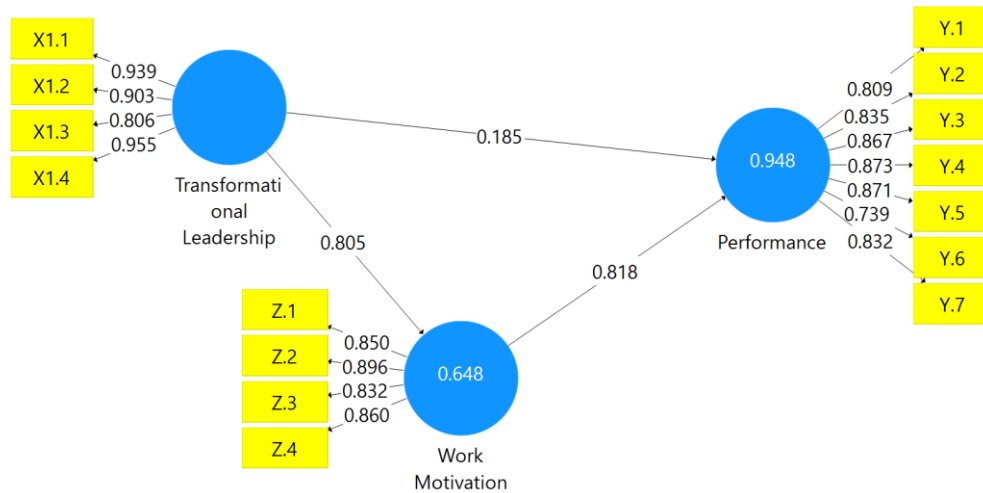


Figure 2. Outer Loading

Reliability Test

Table 2. Construct Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Performance	0.926	0.928	0.941	0.695
Transformational Leadership	0.923	0.929	0.946	0.815
Work Motivation	0.882	0.883	0.919	0.739

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-squared for each dependent latent variable. The table below shows the R-squared estimation results using SmartPLS.

Table 3. R Square Results

	R Square	Adjusted R-Square
Work Motivation	0.648	0.643
Performance	0.948	0.947

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 0.648, meaning that the influence of transformational leadership is 0.648 or 64.8%, with the remainder attributable to other variables outside the model. The R square value for performance is 0.948, meaning that transformational leadership and work motivation account for 0.948 or 94.8%, 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 -> Performance	0.185	1.515	0.130	Rejected
Transformational Leadership → Work Motivation	0.805	12.577	0.000	Accepted
Work Motivation → Performance	0.818	7.477	0.000	Rejected

Source: Smart PLS Output, 2025

The results in Table 4 show the following direct effect values:

1. Transformational leadership has a positive but insignificant effect on performance with a t-statistic value of 1.515 below 1.96 and a significance of 0.130 above 0.05, meaning that transformational leadership has no real effect on performance because the significance value is above 0.05. The results of this study are not in line with the results of previous studies, namely that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on performance (Fadillah & Mesra, 2023).
2. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation with a t-statistic value of 12.577 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that transformational leadership has a significant effect on performance because the significance value is above 0.05. The results of this study are in line with previous research findings, namely that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on work motivation (Yusup & Maulani, 2023).
3. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on performance with a t-statistic value of 7.477 above 1.96 and a significance of 0.000 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation has a real effect on performance because the significance value is below 0.05. The results of this study are consistent with previous studies, namely that work motivation has a positive and significant effect on performance (Tarigan & Anwar, 2024).

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 -> Work Motivation -> Performance	0.659	7.346	0.000	Accepted

Source: Smart PLS, 2025

Table 5 shows the indirect effect between variables, namely that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on performance through work motivation with a t-statistic value of 3.704 above 1.96 and a significance value of 0.003 below 0.05, meaning that work motivation acts as an intervening variable between transformational leadership and performance. The results of this study are also in line with the results of previous studies (Fadillah & Mesra, 2023).

Conclusion

1. Transformational leadership has a positive but insignificant effect on the performance of neighborhood heads at the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office in Medan City.
2. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the work motivation of neighborhood heads at the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office in Medan City.
3. Work motivation has a positive and significant effect on the performance of neighborhood heads at the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office in Medan City.
4. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on the performance of neighborhood heads through work motivation at the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office in Medan City.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The lowest-scoring statement was "I take the initiative to complete my work and take full responsibility for the results." Therefore, the recommendation that can be given is This recommendation means that employees at the Medan Baru Subdistrict Office need to be more proactive in taking the first step to complete tasks without always waiting for orders from their superiors (work initiative). In addition, they are also expected to have a high sense of responsibility for the results of their work, both in terms of timeliness and quality. To achieve this, leaders need to provide regular guidance such as coaching, weekly performance evaluations, and setting an example as role models. In addition, continuous work motivation—for example, through awards for outstanding employees or recognition of good performance—will help foster enthusiasm and a sense of ownership for the work being done.
2. Work motivation with the lowest score was "I am satisfied with my work results and my current work environment." In this case, the sub-district office needs to improve employee job satisfaction by improving the work environment and providing appreciation for work results in order to create a more comfortable and productive work atmosphere.
3. Transformational leadership with the lowest value statement "My leader pays attention to the needs, potential, and development of each team member personally." The Medan Baru Sub-District Office needs to increase leadership attention and guidance regarding the needs and potential of individual employees so that career development and team performance can be optimized. This suggestion indicates that leadership attention to each employee still needs to be improved. Ideally, leaders should not only direct work, but also understand the strengths, weaknesses, and development needs of each team member. By providing personal coaching, constructive feedback, and training or promotion opportunities in line with their potential, employees will feel more valued and motivated.

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