

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance in Three-Star Hotels: The Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction

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Abstract: This study aims to examine the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance, both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction mediation among hotel employees in East Java. The research population consists of 3-star hotel employees in East Java. The sample was determined using the purposive sampling method. Data were collected through a survey technique and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling with WarPLS 7.0. The results show that transformational leadership significantly influences employee performance both directly and indirectly, through job satisfaction mediation, among 3-star hotel employees in East Java. This study offers a theoretical contribution to the applicability of Social Exchange Theory (SET) and practical implications, suggesting that managers need to be equipped with transformational leadership skills to improve employee performance.

Introduction

Indonesia's hospitality industry, including that of East Java, continues to experience rapid growth. Data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) show a significant increase in the number of hotels in East Java, with the total rising from 3,783 in 2023 to 4,055 in 2024. This makes East Java the province with the highest hotel growth in the country. In terms of star classification, the region has 61 three-star hotels spread across cities like Banyuwangi, Bojonegoro, Pasuruan, Malang, Sidoarjo, Jombang, Tulungagung, Batu, and Surabaya (<https://jatim.bps.go.id/id/statistics-table/1/NjgxIzE=/hotel-dan-kamar-menurut-klasifikasi-hotel-di-provinsi-jawa-timur-2016.html>). The increase in hotel numbers reflects the growing interest from tourists visiting East Java's cultural, historical, and natural attractions. However, this growth has also intensified competition within the industry, prompting hotels to adopt effective strategies to remain competitive. Additionally, the government's proposed VAT increase from 11% to 12% is expected to affect the hospitality sector in East Java (<https://jatim.idntimes.com/news/jatim/khusnul-hasana/hotel-jatim-sambat-dihantam-aturan-baru-dan-kenaikan-pajak-12-persen>), presenting a challenge for local hoteliers.

To thrive in this competitive landscape, East Java hotel manager must focus on human resource (HR) management, a key asset for organizational sustainability. A critical element of HR is employee performance, which directly impacts service quality. As service providers, hotels rely heavily on employee performance to meet customer expectations. Hotels with high-performing employees are better positioned to succeed. According to Na-Nan et al. (2018), employee performance is defined as the behavior exhibited in the workplace, reflecting the quality, quantity, and timeliness of work in line with organizational goals.

In East Java's hotel industry, there remains a significant number of customer complaints regarding service quality. Research by Armadita & Sitohang (2021) at the Mercure Grand Mirama Surabaya identified several issues in employee performance, such as failure to follow standard operating procedures (SOP), improper handling of customer complaints, slow response times, lack of attention to detail, insufficient initiative, idleness during busy periods, and low employee morale. Additionally, interviews with hotel managers revealed challenges, including poor service, weak team cohesion, and complaints from guests about delayed service (Soegiharto, 2021). These customer concerns suggest that employee performance in East Java's hotels is suboptimal, highlighting the need for effective human resource management strategies to improve service delivery.

One key factor influencing employee performance is job satisfaction. According to Fu et al. (2020), job satisfaction encompasses both physical and emotional contentment derived from various aspects of an employee's work. Research by Memon et al. (2023) found that job satisfaction positively impacts employee performance in the construction industry, with higher satisfaction leading to improved performance. Satisfied employees tend to be more productive, committed, and have lower absenteeism rates (Inayat & Khan, 2021). Hotels can improve performance and gain mutual benefits for both staff and the organization by implementing management strategies that enhance employee satisfaction

Transformational leadership is a critical factor influencing employee performance. According to Ohunakin et al. (2019), transformational leaders are those who support the personal and professional development of their employees. This leadership style is defined as a process in which leaders act as role models, inspire creativity, provide motivational support, and guide their followers toward achieving the organization's vision and objectives (Mahmood, Uddin, & Fan, 2018). In line with Social Exchange Theory (SET), the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance is based on a reciprocal exchange (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015). Transformational leaders use various behaviors to promote actions that benefit the organization and encourage high performance from their followers (Lai et al., 2020). Employees motivated by transformational leadership tend to enhance their performance. Previous studies by Ariyabuddhiphongs & Kahn (2017), Lai et al. (2020), and Hsinkuang Chi (2023) confirm that transformational leadership positively impacts employee performance.

Moreover, transformational leadership can also indirectly improve employee performance by enhancing job satisfaction, as indicated by the research of Hsinkuang Chi et al. (2023) and Adri et al. (2019). Transformational leaders are capable of increasing job satisfaction, which in turn leads to improved performance (Rachman et al., 2020; Memon et al., 2023; Inayat & Khan, 2021).

Although studies linking transformational leadership to positive outcomes like enhanced job performance are abundant, fewer have explored how transformational leaders inspire and motivate their employees to meet organizational performance expectations, especially within the hospitality industry (Lai et al., 2020). Some research suggests that transformational leadership directly impacts employee performance (Ariyabuddhiphongs & Kahn, 2017; Lai et al., 2020; Hsinkuang Chi et al., 2023). However, Meiryani et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership does not directly affect employee performance in Jakarta. The inconsistency in previous research findings serves as the driving force behind this study. Therefore this research aims to explore the direct and indirect effects of transformational leadership on employee performance, with job satisfaction serving as a mediator, specifically among three stars hotel employees in East Java.

. This study enriches the theoretical framework of Social Exchange Theory (SET) and provides practical insights for organizations. It highlights that developing transformational leadership skills in leaders can improve employee performance by enhancing job satisfaction.

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses

Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

Transformational leadership refers to a leadership style that has the aim of directing employees to show more concern for organizational success than self-interest (Bass, 1985) in (Peng et al., 2020). Transformational leadership is defined as a process in which leaders become ideal role models and encourage creativity, provide inspirational motivation, and engage in supporting and guiding followers to achieve the organization's shared vision and goals (Mahmood, Uddin, & Fan, 2018). In this study, transformational leadership is measured

using 4 indicators developed by Bass and Avolio (1995), namely: Idealized influence, Inspirational, Intellectual stimulation, Individualized consideration. Meanwhile, employee performance is defined as the results of work given according to the wishes of the organization in the form of quality of work, quantity of work and working time. (Na-Nan et al, 2018).

Better application of transformational leadership can improve employee performance. The results of Kovjanic research, et al (2013) in Adri et al., (2019) state that there is a positive and significant effect of transformational leadership on employee performance. Employees who are inspired by leaders who apply transformational leadership gauya will be encouraged to work better. The research findings of Ariyabuddhiphongs & Kahn, (2017), Lai et al., 2020; Hsinkuang Chi et al., 2023, explain that transformational leadership is directly able to improve employee performance. The hypotheses developed are:

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on employee performance.

Transformational Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction is one of the most important factors in HR development that leads to organizational efficiency. Job satisfaction is defined as the presence of positive and pleasant employee attitudes and feelings towards the work environment (Farooqui and Nagendra, 2014 in Indrayani et al (2024). Aspects of job satisfaction vary across countries and change over time so studying job satisfaction across cultures and over time is important (Indrayani et al, 2024). Indicators of measuring job satisfaction as stated by Cellucci and Devries (1978) in (Fu et al., 2020) are as follows: 1) Thoughts of staying on the job, 2) Satisfaction with job activities 3) Satisfaction with the job as a whole.

Transformational leadership is able to increase employee job satisfaction. In accordance with motivational theories (Alderfer, 1969; Herzberg et al., 1993; Vroom, 1964), when employees feel supported and guided by transformational leaders, employees feel valued by the organization and satisfied with work (Hsinkuang Chi, et al 2023). The research results of Rachman et al, 2020; Hsinkuang Chi et al., 2023 explain that transformational leadership can increase job satisfaction. Thus the hypothesis developed is:

H2: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on job satisfaction.

Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Satisfied and happy employees are productive employees. Better performance is a consequence of meeting employee needs (Judge et al, 2021 in Hsinkuang Chi et al., 2023). This reflects that organizations that make their employees feel happy will have more employees who are more productive (Roberts & David, 2020). As the findings of research conducted by Memon et al (2023) and Inayat & Khan (2021), increased job satisfaction will encourage increased employee performance. The hypothesis developed in the current study is:

H3: Job satisfaction positively affects employee performance.

Transformational Leadership, Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Based on the results of previous research, it appears that transformational leadership has a positive influence on job satisfaction as a result of research by Rachman et al, 2020; Hsinkuang Chi, 2023. Meanwhile, the results of research conducted by Memon et al (2023) and Inayat & Khan (2021) show that job satisfaction has a positive influence on employee performance. It is concluded that transformational leadership is able to increase job satisfaction and increased job satisfaction will further improve employee performance. Job satisfaction is a mediating variable in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. The results of research by Hsinkuang Chi (2023) and Adri et al (2019) prove that job satisfaction mediates the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance. Thus the research hypothesis developed is:

H4: Job satisfaction mediates the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance.

Research Method

This study adopts a descriptive research design with a quantitative approach, aiming to test hypotheses through measurable data. According to Sugiyono (2019), quantitative research seeks to evaluate the strength of a hypothesis based on data obtained from a specific population or sample. Descriptive research, as defined by Sugiyono (2019), analyzes data by presenting it as it is, without attempting to generalize or draw broad conclusions. Data collection for this study is conducted using a survey method, with questionnaires serving as the primary tool.

Transformational leadership, as viewed by 3-star hotel employees in East Java, refers to the behaviors of leaders who influence employee attitudes and foster commitment to the company's mission, goals, and strategies. It is measured through the following indicators: Idealized Influence, Inspirational Motivation, Intellectual Stimulation, and Individualized Consideration. Job performance is defined as the perception of 3-star hotel employees in East Java regarding the quantity and quality of work they produce, as well as the time spent on tasks, in alignment with the organization's expectations. Job satisfaction, as perceived by 3-star hotel employees in East Java, refers to overall employee contentment, which includes their intention to stay in their current job, satisfaction with their job responsibilities, and overall satisfaction with various aspects of their work.

The population for this study consists of employees from 3-star hotels in East Java. The research sample includes 102 employees who meet specific criteria: they are permanent employees of at least 3-star hotels in the region and have been with the company for a minimum of one year. The purposive sampling method is employed, where the researcher selects participants based on these criteria.

The data for this study is primary, collected through a survey method involving the distribution of questionnaires. The responses provide insights into participants' perceptions of transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance.

The research data is analyzed using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) method using WarpPLS 7.0 software. The analysis involves testing the outer model to assess the validity and

reliability of the research instruments, testing the inner model to evaluate model fit, and conducting hypothesis testing.

Result and Discussion

Research Samples

The distribution of research questionnaires was carried out through the WhatsApp group of the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI) and visited directly at several 3-star hotels in the East Java area. A total of 102 respondents were successfully obtained with the following samples characteristics:

Table 1. Samples Characteristic

No.	Aspects	Characteristics	Percentage
1.	Gander	Male	53
		Female	47
2.	Age	18 until 22 years	42
		23 until 27 years	22
		28 until 32 years	7
		33 until 37 years	5
		38 until 40 years	1
		More than 40 years	23
3.	Last Education	SLTA	41
		Diploma	17
		Undergraduate	37
		S2	2
		Other	3
4.	Work Period	1 until 3 tahun	53
		3 until 5 tahun	15
		5 until 7 tahun	8
		7 until 9 tahun	2
		More than (9years	22

Source: Research Data

Referring to table 1, the research respondents were dominated by male hotel employees, aged between 18-22 years, high school education, have a working period of 1 - 3 years.

Outer Model Evaluation

Outer model evaluation is carried out to test the level of validity and reliability of research instruments. In this study, the convergent validity and reliability tests gave the results as in table 2 below:

Table 2. Convergen Validity and Reliability Test

Variables	Item Code	Loading Factor	AVE	Composite Reliability	Cronbach Alpha
Transformational Leadership	KT1	(0.682)	0.568	0.902	0.872
	KT4	(0.773)			
	KT5	(0.855)			
	KT6	(0.726)			

	KT7	(0.718)			
	KT9	(0.731)			
	KT10	(0.779)			
Employee Performance	KP1	(0.654)	0.514	0.926	0.913
	KP3	(0.677)			
	KP4	(0.663)			
	KP6	(0.724)			
	KP7	(0.579)			
	KP8	(0.756)			
	KP9	(0.748)			
	KP10	(0.814)			
	KP11	(0.770)			
	KP12	(0.756)			
	KP13	(0.733)			
	KP14	(0.697)			
Job Satisfaction	KK1	(0.855)	0.768	0.904	0.840
	KK2	(0.873)			
	KK3	(0.884)			

Source: Result of Data Examination

Based on the tests that have been carried out in table 2, it can be explained that all variable indicators have a loading factor value of more than 0.5 and an AVE value > 0.5, so it can be said that the research instrument has met the criteria for convergent validity (Ghozali & Henky Latan, 2015). The Composite reliability and Cronbach Alpha have a value of more than 0.6, so it can be said that the construct is reliable (Ghozali & Henky Latan, 2015). In addition, discriminant validity testing is carried out which is presented in table 3 as follows:

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

	Transformational Leadership	Employee Performance	Job Satisfaction
Transformational Leadership	(0.754)	0.670	0.598
Employee Performance	0.670	(0.717)	0.655
Job Satisfaction	0.598	0.655	(0.871)

Source: Result of Data Examination

Based on the results of discriminant validity testing, it can be seen that the construct of the square root value of AVE (the number in parentheses) for each variable has a value greater than the correlation value of other variables. So based on the results of the outer model evaluation, it can be concluded that all statement items from each variable have good validity and reliability values.

Inner Model Evaluation

The following analysis carried out is to conduct an inner model analysis which aims to see the evaluation of the structural equation model (SEM).

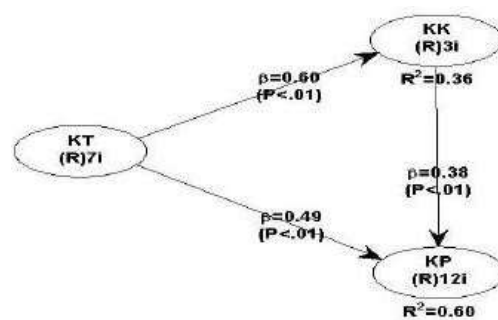


Figure 1. Structural Model

KT = Transformational Leadership, KK = Job Satisfaction, KP = Employee Performance

R-Square and Q-Square values

In evaluating the inner model, the R-Square and Q-Square values are used. R-Square to determine the magnitude of the influence of exogenous variables on endogenous variables. The results of this test can be seen in table 4.

Table 4. R-Square dan Q-Square Values

Variables	R ²	Q ²
Employee Performance	0.596	0.599
Job Satisfaction	0.362	0.360

Source: Result of Data Examination

Based on the results of the R-Square test, it can be seen that the R-Square value on the performance variable is 0.596, meaning that 59.6% of the variation in the employee performance variable can be explained by variations in the transformational leadership and job satisfaction variables, the remaining 40.4% is explained by variables outside the variables in the current study. Job satisfaction has an R-square of 0.362. This means that 36.2% of the variation in job satisfaction variables is explained by variations in transformational leadership variables, the remaining 63.8% is explained by variables outside the variables in the current study. Based on the R-Square value, this research model is in the medium category. This can be seen from the R-Square value with the rule of thumb 0.26 - 0.50 in the medium category.

Stone Geisser's Q² value is a model validation used to evaluate the model. This measurement tool is an indicator of the predictive relevance of the model. A Q² value of more than zero (>0) of the endogenous variables indicates good predictive ability. Based on table 3, it appears that the model has good predictive relevance because the Q² value is more than zero (>0).

Multicollinearity and Model Fit Test

VIF values equal to or more than 3.3 indicate multicollinearity. VIF in this study can be seen in table 5 as follows:

Table 5. Variance Inflated Factor (VIF)

Variables	VIF
Transformational Leadership	1.973
Employee Performance	2.220
Job Satisfaction	1.903

Source: Result of Data Examination

From the results of this research in the table above shows that each variable in this study has a VIF value smaller than 3.3, so it can be said that there is no multicollinearity.

Table 6. Model Fit and Quality Indices

Aspects	Criteria	Value	Conclusions
APC	$P < 0.001$	0.491 ($P < 0.001$)	Accepted
ARS	$P < 0.001$	0.479 ($P < 0.001$)	Accepted
AARS	$P < 0.001$	0.472 ($P < 0.001$)	Accepted
AVIF	Acceptable if < 5 Ideally if < 3.3	1.459	Accepted
AFVIF	Acceptable if < 5 Ideally if < 3.3	2.032	Accepted
GoF	small ≥ 0.1 , medium ≥ 0.25 , large ≥ 0.36	0.542	Large
SPR	acceptable if ≥ 0.7 , ideally = 1	1.000	Accepted
RSC	acceptable if ≥ 0.9 , ideally = 1	1.000	Accepted
SSR	acceptable if ≥ 0.7	1.000	Accepted
NLBCDR	acceptable if ≥ 0.7	1.000	Accepted

Source: Result of Data Examination

Based on the results of the analysis in table 6 above using the WarpPLS 7.0 program, it shows in general, if the fit model and Quality Indices are in accordance with the criteria.

Hypothesis Testing Results

Next, the researcher will discuss the results of the analysis that has been carried out previously with the aim of explaining the achievement of the objectives of this study. The following is a discussion of each hypothesis.

Table 7 Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	Coefficient Values (β)	p-values	Conclussions
H1	KT $\rightarrow$ KP	0.493	< 0.001	Accepted
H2	KT $\rightarrow$ KK	0.602	< 0.001	Accepted
H3	KK $\rightarrow$ KP	0.379	< 0.001	Accepted
H4	KT $\rightarrow$ KK $\rightarrow$ KP	0.228	< 0.001	Accepted

Source: Result of Data Examination

Discussion

The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance

The findings from the first hypothesis of this study indicate that transformational

leadership has a significant positive impact on job performance is accepted. This is evidenced by a coefficient (β) of 0.493 for transformational leadership on employee performance, with a p-value of <0.001 . These results demonstrate that transformational leadership significantly influences the performance of 3-star hotel employees in the East Java region.

These results align with previous studies, including those by Kovjanic et al. (2013), as cited in Adri et al. (2019), Ariyabuddhiphongs & Kahn (2017), Lai et al. (2020), and Hsinkuang Chi et al. (2023), which concluded that the more transformational leadership is practiced, the better the performance of employees in 3-star hotels in East Java. Additionally, this study supports the application of social exchange theory (SET) where employees who are treated well by their leaders, given examples, are motivated to reciprocate with better work behavior and vice versa.

The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Job Satisfaction.

Based on the results of the research on the second hypothesis of these studies which states that Transformational Leadership significantly has a positive effect on Job Satisfaction is accepted. This is supported by the coefficient value (β) in the variable Structural Leadership to Job Satisfaction with a value of 0.602 with a p-value of <0.001 . The results of this study are in line with the results of previous research according to Bass and Avolio (1993) in (Puni et al., 2018:5), Rachman et al, 2020; Hsinkuang Chi et al., 2023. These findings support the application of motivation theories that explain that when employees feel supported and guided by transformational leaders, they feel valued by the organization and grow a sense of job satisfaction (Hsinkuang Chi, et al 2023). The results of the study explain that the higher the implementation of transformational leadership, the higher the job satisfaction of 3 stars hotel employees in East Java Area and vice versa

The Effect of Job Satisfaction on Employee Performance

Based on the results of the research on the third hypothesis of this study, which states that Job Satisfaction significantly has a positive effect on job performance is accepted. This is supported by the coefficient value (β) in the variable of Transformational Leadership on Job Satisfaction with a value of 0.379 with a p-value of <0.001 . It is said that a productive employee is a happy employee because his needs are met. According to Judge Judge et al., 2021 in Hsinkuang Chi et al., 2023 employees whose needs are met will be happy and satisfied and show better performance. The results of this study are in line with previous research according to Milkovich & Boudreau, (1991) in (Koo et al., 2019:5), Memon et al (2023) and Inayat & Khan (2021), which stated that employee job satisfaction has a positive and significant effect on company performance, which means the higher the Job Satisfaction, the higher the performance of 3-star hotel employees in the East Java area and vice versa.

The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Job Performance Mediated by Job Satisfaction

Based on the results of the research on the fourth hypothesis of this study, which states that Job Satisfaction significantly mediates the influence of Transformational Leadership on

job performance, is accepted. The results of this study are in line with previous research according to Kovjanic, et al (2013) in Adri et al., (2019) stating that there is a positive and significant influence on transformational leadership variables on employee performance mediated by job satisfaction. It appears that transformational leadership has a positive influence on job satisfaction as the results of Rachman et al., 2020; Hsinkuang Chi, 2023. Meanwhile, the results of research conducted by Memon et al (2023) and Inayat & Khan (2021) show that job satisfaction has a positive influence on employee performance. It is concluded that transformational leadership is able to increase job satisfaction and increasing job satisfaction will subsequently improve employee performance. Job satisfaction is a mediating variable in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. The results of Hsinkuang Chi (2023) research prove that job satisfaction mediates the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance. It can be concluded that the higher the implementation of Transformational Leadership, the higher the job satisfaction, then the higher the Job Satisfaction which will ultimately improve the performance of 3-star hotel employees in the East Java area.

Conclusion

Based on the results of this study, it is proven that in the context of the hospitality industry, transformational leadership can influence employee performance both directly and indirectly through job satisfaction. The results provide theoretical implications for the applicability of social exchange theory in the relationship between transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and employee performance. The findings of this study also provide practical implications where managers and company leaders can develop transformational leadership styles through training in transformational leadership as a strategy to enhance job satisfaction and performance of 3-star hotel employees in East Java. This study has several limitations, including the use of non-random sampling techniques which means the findings cannot be generalized. Therefore, future researchers may choose random sampling techniques. In addition, the use of cross-sectional data means that this research can only describe relationships at a specific point in time without considering changes or developments that occur over time. This research cannot identify factors that may change or influence the variables studied in the future. Therefore, future research can use longitudinal data.

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