

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP, WORK ENGAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE CHAMPIONING BEHAVIOR: A THEORETICAL MODEL

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Abstract

Purpose – This study aims to examine and analyze: (1) the direct effect of transformational leadership on employee championing behavior; (2) the direct influence of transformational leadership on work engagement; (3) the direct effect of work engagement on employee championing behavior; and (4) the effect of work engagement in mediating the relationship between transformational leadership and employee championing behavior.

Methodology/Approach – This study uses a qualitative method by analyzing and reviewing the results of previous studies related to the relationship between transformational leadership, work engagement, and employee championing behavior. This study analyses the 20 most recent articles published in reputable international journals obtained by accessing <https://www.emerald.com/>, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/>, and <https://scholar.google.com/>.

Findings – The results show that transformational leadership significantly affects employee championing behavior and work engagement. Furthermore, work engagement plays a vital role in mediating the relationship between transformational leadership and employee championing behavior.

Originality/ Value/ Implication – Due to the finite and limited amount of existing research, the results of this study add value and develop literature related to the relationship between transformational leadership, work engagement, and employee championing behavior.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Work Engagement, Championing Behavior

1. Introduction

Leaders have an important role in direct employees effectively to achieve the expected goals in the organization (Jamaludin, 2017). Leaders who influence their employees and involve them actively to achieve organizational goals will create a harmonious relationship between leaders and subordinates to give birth to good cooperation (Kharis, 2015).

One of the leadership styles that prioritizes the achievement of the vision and a good work environment for employees is transformational leadership (Prayudi, 2020). Transformational leadership is a leadership style that can provide motivation and inspiration and can influence employees to improve performance to achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently (Astuty & Udin, 2020; Gita & Yuniawan, 2016).

Safitri (2020) asserts that leaders who can create harmonious relationships with employees can encourage them to have a sense of championing behavior to appear more active, creative and have a high sense of competition to become the best person. Based on the finding of Islam et al. (2020), transformational leadership has a significant effect on championing behavior. This research is also reinforced by the findings of Faupel & Süß (2019) that transformational leaders can effectively influence championing behavior. However, those findings are different from the results of Islam et al. (2020), which states that transformational leadership has no significant effect on employee championing behavior. Thus, the relationship between transformational leadership and employee championing behavior is still inconclusive and debatable.

Therefore, to bridge the research gap, this study offers work engagement as a mediator variable. The role of work engagement is seen as quite necessary in forming a positive work attitude into work behavior. In other words, the existence of work engagement can strengthen the influence of positive attitudes between transformational leadership and championing behavior among employees. This study aimed to examine and analyze: (1) the direct influence of transformational leadership on championing behavior; (2) the direct influence of transformational leadership on work engagement; (3) the direct effect of work engagement on championing behavior; and (4) the effect of work engagement in mediating the relationship between transformational leadership and championing behavior.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Championing Behaviour

Championing behavior is an attitude of high enthusiasm to ensure success and promote effective organizational change (Ateş et al., 2017). According to Ardy (2019), championing behavior can be categorized as discretionary behavior, where employees provide services that exceed organizational expectations to ensure organizational change and success.

Championing behavior includes employee commitment to change, readiness, and willingness to change in order to achieve success in the organization. Champion employees always take risks, work harder and go the extra mile to achieve challenging organizational goals (Ali, 2020).

2.2 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a universal and enduring leadership style for effective organizational change management (Simarmata et al., 2021). Lian (2020) suggests that transformational leaders emphasize capacity building and changing employee behavior in the change process in organizations. In addition, transformational leaders are closely related to productivity, motivation, employee work involvement, and assisting organizations in achieving the goals set (Hairudinor, 2021), (Udin, 2021b).

According to Ferlina (2020), transformational leaders act as tutors, trainers, and inspiring mentors for employees. Transformational leadership shows that leaders can make employees more aware of work values, needs and direct them to prioritize organizational goals (Soelton et al., 2018), (Udin, 2021a), (Udin, Suud, & Firdausi, 2021).

Transformational leaders are able to inspire and increase employee motivation to a higher level (Siswatiningsih et al., 2019), thus influencing employee championing behavior. Azzahra (2020) states that transformational leaders stimulate and improve employee championing behavior to achieve optimal organizational goals. Transformational leaders also develop innovation and a visionary mindset in employees by ensuring high work engagement. Furthermore, Ferlina (2020) found a strong relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. Therefore,

H1: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on employee champion behavior

H2: Transformational leadership has a significant effect on work engagement

2.3 Work Engagement

Kurniawati (2018) defines work engagement as a critical concept that reflects employee participation in work. The concept of work engagement consists of passion (engagement in a job with a higher energy level) and dedication (feeling challenged to the job and finding it difficult to get away from the job) (Asan & Huliselan, 2020).

Bakker & Albrecht (2018) show that engaged employees have access to various resources to perform better in their work. Bakker & Albrecht (2018) also show that employees will have higher work engagement when they have higher personal resources, including strong self-efficacy, optimism, and resilience. Engaged employees also tend to help each other in promoting positive organizational performance (Febriansyah, 2019), (Ilmih, 2019). Engaged employees will be more creative and brave to face various challenges to achieve organizational goals.

Work engagement increases extra employee performance (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018), even to the point of being able to deal with complex situations (Diningrat et al., 2018). Thus, work engagement leads to championing employee behavior to make positive changes within the organization. Therefore,

H3: Work engagement has a significant effect on employee champion behavior

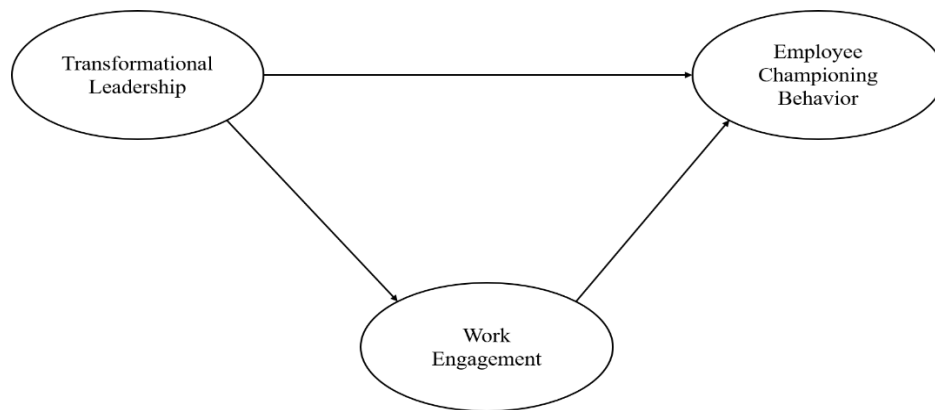


Figure 1. Research Model

3. Research Methods

This study is a conceptual paper by proposing a research model. This study uses a qualitative method by analyzing and reviewing the results of previous studies related to the relationship between transformational leadership, work engagement, and employee championing behavior. This study analyses the 20 most recent articles published in reputable international journals obtained by accessing <https://www.emerald.com/>, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/>, and <https://scholar.google.com/>.

4. Results and Discussion

The results of this study indicate that transformational leadership is closely related to work engagement. Individualized consideration of transformational leadership shows great concern for employees regarding their needs, achievement, and career growth (Bass & Riggio, 2006). By using idealized influence and individualized consideration, transformational leadership is able to influence employees to perform extra behaviors beyond previous expectations, make them more aware of the task's importance, and encourage them to prioritize organizational achievement over their own goals. Also, by appearing as a role model, transformational leaders build employee loyalty to work effectively and full of energy to make a better contribution to the organization. In addition, social exchange theory (Blau, 1968) explains that when leaders show genuine concern for employees, they perform better in increasing their sense of belonging to the organization (Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2016). With this increased sense of belonging, employees reciprocate genuine concern by delivering the best in their work.

The study conducted by Islam et al. (2020) found that work engagement significantly affects employee championing behavior. Engaged employees tend to build a positive organizational work climate (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018), dare to take challenges, and appear more creative to achieve organizational goals (Orth & Volmer, 2017). Engaged employees feel empowered to participate and appear like a champion in the organization by demonstrating a positive attitude, high commitment, and readiness to change in order to achieve long-term organizational growth and success.

5. Conclusion

This study concludes that transformational leadership significantly affects employee championing behavior and work engagement. Furthermore, work engagement plays a vital role in mediating the relationship between transformational leadership and employee championing behavior.

The limitation that needs to be noted in this study is due to a conceptual paper in nature, of course, it is still limited to assumptions that need empirical evidence.

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