

Leadership style and employee performance: The mediating role of training

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ABSTRACT

Purpose-Improving employee performance cannot be separated from how companies manage leadership styles and can organize relevant training programs. This research examines how leadership styles influence employee performance, with training as a mediating factor at the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency in Indonesia.

Design/Methodology/Approach-Convenience sampling was employed as the sampling strategy. The sample consisted of 75 employees, and data were collected via questionnaires distributed physically and completed directly by employees at the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency. Following data collection from the respondents, Smart PLS was employed to arrange the information in tables and conduct the analysis.

Findings-The findings demonstrated that while training had no discernible impact on employee performance, either directly or through mediating the relationship between leadership style and performance, leadership style had a significant and positive direct effect on employee performance.

Research limitations/implications-The study's limitations are due to the small sample size and the fact that it only looked at Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency employees. Therefore, considering the unique characteristics of each employee in their respective agencies, the results of this study might not necessarily apply to other similar companies.

Originality/value-This study is original because it focuses on the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency, an agency that has distinctive field work and community service characteristics that differentiate it from other organizations. This research is important because it enhances the knowledge base related to managing people in government jobs. Furthermore, it offers hands-on advice on how to boost the skills of leaders and make training more impactful, ultimately helping workers do their jobs better.

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1. Introduction

In this era of bureaucratic reform and demands for improved public service quality, government officials are required to work professionally, effectively, and in a results-oriented

way. Human resources are the most important assets of an organization, both in the public and private sectors (Knies et al., 2024). Human resources play an important role in designing, managing, and developing an organization so that it can survive and successfully achieve its goals (Rustiawan et al., 2023). High-quality human resources are reflected in the performance of individuals and organizations as a whole (Putri & Hartono, 2023). The success of a company's objectives is entirely dependent on the dedicated involvement of its workforce. Ochieng (2023) explains that the management and regulation of human resources in an organization is a complex process due to differences in opinions, feelings, positions, and backgrounds of each individual.

Within governmental organizations, how well employees perform their duties is a critical measure of how successful the organization is at delivering public services that are effective, efficient, and accountable public service functions (Beeri et al., 2019). Performance is the result of the work done by an employee when they perform their assigned duties (Obuobisa-Darko, 2020). The rapid advancement of science and technology requires companies to adapt and remain relevant in the face of various conditions. The long-term viability of a business hinges on the performance of its workforce (Afrin et al., 2023). According to Vuong and Nguyen (2022), good employee performance can help organizations achieve their strategic goals and provide quality services to the community. Nevertheless, in the real world, there exist numerous elements capable of influencing how well an employee performs, including the way leadership is conducted and the education that employees receive.

Fluctuations in employee performance in an organization are greatly influenced by several factors. The manner in which leaders choose to manage can impact how well employees perform their jobs (Nkamdem, 2021). Leadership style is one of the factors that plays an important role in shaping employee behavior and motivation (Arifuddin et al., 2023). According to Velu et al. (2017), effective leadership can inspire, motivate, and guide employees to achieve optimal performance. A good leader is one who can provide clear directions, be fair, and set an example, thereby creating a positive work atmosphere and increasing employee morale (Khuong & Hoang, 2015). Conversely, a leadership style that lacks communication and is authoritarian can reduce employee's motivation, loyalty, and productivity. According to Chua et al. (2018), leadership style is a way in which a leader possesses a certain characteristic attitude to influence employees in achieving organizational goals. A good leader knows how to generate optimism and knowledge so that employees can complete their tasks well (Chen et al., 2018).

Effective leadership does not only depend on instructions and supervision but also on the extent to which the organization can provide relevant training programs to improve employee capabilities (Misra & Mohanty, 2021). Training is often considered the most common and visible employee activity (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017). Training plays an important role in improving employees' technical and non-technical skills so that they can carry out their duties in accordance with job requirements (Ghouse et al., 2018). Good training can also contribute to a company's success in achieving its goals. According to Nyoman (2024), training is a shared responsibility between employees and the organization, where employees have an obligation to design and participate in training to develop their skills to open up better career paths in the future. Training is a form of organizational investment in human resource development that can strengthen the influence of leadership style on performance (Yahuza & Suleiman, 2024). Therefore, training should act as an intermediary element that connects how a leader leads with how well an employee performs their job (Al-Harthy & Yusof, 2016).

The Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency, responsible for regulating and supervising the transportation system and public services in the field of transportation, encounters considerable difficulties in its mission to sustain and boost the productivity of its workforce. Based on the 2022 performance report of the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency, there are several performance indicators that still need to be improved, such as the effectiveness of traffic supervision and the improvement of public transportation service quality. This indicates challenges in achieving optimal employee performance. In addition, employee training has been conducted at the transportation agency, such as portable scale operation training and training of trainers for the traffic safety education park. However, these trainings are still incidental and not planned on an ongoing basis; therefore, their impact on improving employee performance is not

yet fully optimal. This condition makes training an interesting variable to study as a mediator between leadership style and employee performance. A previous study on a similar agency conducted by Aminullah (2024) examined the impact of organizational support on employee performance through work engagement at the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency. This condition shows that the agency has a conducive environment and good accessibility for research on human resources and performance, thus fulfilling the requirements of a research object.

Previous studies have confirmed the relevance of the relationships between the variables studied. For example, Al-Harthy and Yusof (2016) found a positive influence of leadership style on employee performance, where training served as a mediating variable. Similarly, Baten (2017) revealed that effective training can encourage employee motivation and performance through increased work competence. However, research with a similar focus using local government agencies as the object of study, especially the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency, is limited. This study scrutinizes how leadership style impacts employee performance while considering the role of training as an intermediate factor within the Transportation Agency of Yogyakarta City. It is anticipated that the discoveries from this research will help improve ideas about how to manage employees who work in the public sector, as well as provide consideration for agency leaders in designing more effective leadership strategies and training programs to improve employee performance.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Leadership style refers to the manner in which a leader influences, directs, and motivates subordinates to achieve organizational goals (Tamimi & Sopiah, 2022). Lehmann-Willenbrock et al. (2015) explain that leadership style reflects the consistent patterns of behavior used by leaders when interacting with team members. Effective leaders can inspire and motivate their teams through good examples (DuBois et al., 2015). Based on the transformational and transactional leadership theories of Bass and Avolio (1994), transformational leaders focus on providing inspiration, motivation, and capacity building for subordinates, whereas transactional leaders prioritize reward systems and supervision. Ohemeng et al. (2018) showed that in a government agency environment, a participatory and inspirational leadership style is more effective in improving employee performance than an authoritarian style. Effective leadership can increase employee motivation and productivity in the public sector (Sokolić et al., 2024). Thus, leadership style is one of the main factors in achieving organizational performance. Effective leadership styles can create a conducive work environment, increase work enthusiasm, and encourage the achievement of organizational goals (Cai, 2023). **H₁: Leadership Style Positively Affects Employee Performance.**

The manner in which a leader leads greatly influences the success of training programs in an organization. Leaders serve as directors, motivators, and facilitators in creating a conducive learning culture in the work environment (Kragt & Guenter, 2018). For example, leaders with a transformational style tend to motivate employees to continue learning, innovating, and improving their skills through training (Akdere & Egan, 2020). Sparr et al. (2017) explain that the success of training is highly dependent on the support of leaders, who play an important role in selecting participants, determining training needs, and providing feedback after training is complete. Leaders who can provide inspiration and personal support encourage employees to participate more actively in training programs (Bakker et al., 2023). Al-Harthy and Yusof (2016) state that leadership style has a positive impact on training success because it fosters employees' desire for self-development. Leaders who apply a communicative, supportive, and employee development-oriented leadership style create a work environment conducive to the training process (Wallo, 2017). **H₂: Leadership Style Positively Affects Training.**

Human resource development is highly dependent on training as the primary means of improving employees' competencies, skills, and knowledge so that they can work effectively (Kareem & Hussein, 2019). Malik and Venkatraman (2017) explain that training bridges the gap between the competencies possessed by employees and those required by the organization.

Training focuses on improving technical abilities and developing work attitudes, discipline, and motivation to provide optimal service (Hartadi & Sujoko, 2025). According to Salas et al. (2017), the effectiveness of training is measured by the extent to which the training results can be applied to daily work. Training aligned with organizational needs increases work efficiency, reduces errors, and increases employee job satisfaction. Nor (2023) showed that relevant and continuous training significantly improves employee performance in the public sector. Similar findings were reported by Razak (2021), who stated that targeted training can improve competence and work motivation, which, in turn, significantly improves performance. **H₃: Training Positively Affects Employee Performance.**

Training acts as a mediating variable that explains how leadership style influences employee performance. Effective leaders encourage employees to participate in training, which ultimately improves performance (Misra & Mohanty, 2021). According to Becker's (1918) human capital theory, training is a form of investment in improving employee competence that can strengthen the influence of leadership style on work outcomes. Bin Attan and Mahmood (2019) showed that transformational leadership style increases the effectiveness of training, which in turn has a positive impact on employee performance. Similar findings were reported by Jehow et al. (2018), who found that training can strengthen the influence of leadership style on performance by increasing employee skills and work motivation. **H₄: Leadership Style Affects Employee Performance through Training.**

Figure 1 illustrates the research model framework, which shows the factors influencing employee performance. These factors include leadership style and training, each of which has a positive impact on employee performance. Training also mediates the influence of leadership style on employee performance.

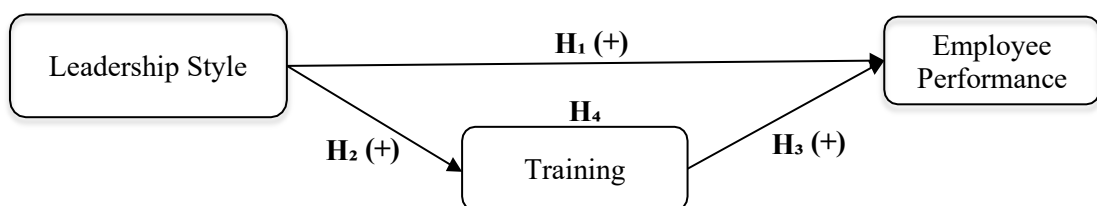


Figure 1. Research Framework

3. Research Methodology

This study involved all employees of the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency as the population, with a sample of 75 people. The sample was determined using non-probability sampling techniques, specifically convenience sampling, which selects respondents based on whoever the researcher happens to find and considers suitable as a data source (Golzar et al., 2022). Data were collected through questionnaires filled out directly by the respondents. Each variable was measured using indicator items with a Likert scale, namely ten indicators for leadership style adapted from Bass and Avolio (1996), ten indicators for employee performance adapted from Atatsi et al. (2019), and ten indicators for training adapted from Elnaga and Imran (2013). Data analysis included validity and reliability testing, as well as regression analysis using SmartPLS. The validity of the indicator items was tested based on the factor loading value; if the value was greater than 0.7, the indicator was declared valid (Hair et al. 2020). Conversely, if the factor loading value was below 0.7, the indicator was considered invalid and excluded from analysis. After validity was tested, reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Variables were declared reliable if the Cronbach's alpha value was above 0.6, and the composite reliability was above 0.7 (Hair et al., 2020). Finally, hypothesis testing was conducted by examining the p-value, where the hypothesis was accepted if the p-value was less than 0.05 (Hair et al., 2020).

4. Results and Discussion

Respondent Characteristics

Table 1 shows the characteristics of the respondents, indicating that the majority of respondents were male, namely 51 people (68%). Respondents were dominated by those aged 36–45 years, with 34 respondents (45%). In addition to gender and age, respondent characteristics were examined based on education, field of work, length of work experience, and employment status. The results show that respondents with a bachelor's degree were the most numerous, namely 33 people (44%), followed by respondents working in functional positions, namely 20 people (27%). The majority of respondents had more than 10 years of work experience, namely 36 respondents (48%), and 54 respondents (72%) were civil servants.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Classification	Description	Frequency	
		Total	Percentage
Gender	Male	51	68
	Female	24	32
Age	20–35 years old	21	28
	36–45 years old	34	45
	46–55 years old	18	24
	> 56 years old	2	3
	Senior/Vocational High School	19	25
Education Level	Diploma	19	25
	Bachelor	33	44
	Postgraduate	4	5
	Functional Position	20	27
Field of Work	Secretary	12	16
	Traffic	14	19
	Road Transport	16	21
	Parking	13	17
Work Experience	0–3 years	7	9
	4–6 years	13	17
	7–9 years	19	25
	> 10 Years	36	48
Employment Status	Civil Servant	54	72
	Non-Civil Servant	21	28

Validity Test

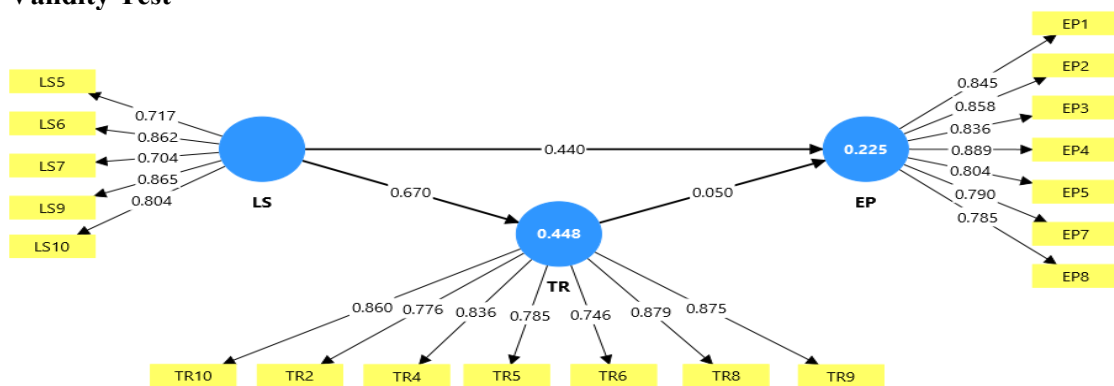


Figure 2. Structural Framework

Table 2 shows that all indicators in this study have a loading factor value above 0.7, which means that each indicator can represent the latent variable well. This shows that the research instrument met the convergent validity requirements, making it suitable for structural model testing.

Table 2. Validity Test Results

Indicator	Leadership Style	Training	Employee Performance
LS5	0.717		
LS6	0.862		
LS7	0.704		
LS9	0.865		
LS10	0.804		
TR2		0.776	
TR4		0.836	
TR5		0.785	
TR6		0.746	
TR8		0.879	
TR9		0.875	
TR10		0.860	
EP1			0.845
EP2			0.858
EP3			0.836
EP4			0.889
EP5			0.804
EP7			0.790
EP8			0.785

Reliability Test

Table 3 shows that all variables have good reliability, as evidenced by Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values of more than 0.6 and 0.7 for leadership style, training, and employee performance. This indicates that the instrument has high internal consistency and an adequate level of reliability in measuring each construct. Thus, all the variables in this study were declared reliable.

Table 3. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability
Employee Performance	0.925	0.939
Leadership Style	0.851	0.894
Training	0.920	0.936

Hypothesis Test

Table 4 displays the results of hypothesis testing. The analysis revealed that not all the hypotheses proposed in this study were supported. The findings indicate that leadership style has a direct and significant positive effect on both employee performance and training, as reflected by a positive coefficient and p-value below 0.05. Conversely, training does not significantly influence employee performance, either directly or as a mediating variable between leadership style and employee performance.

Table 4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis	Original Sample	Sample Mean	Standard Deviation	T Statistics	P Values
Leadership Style → Employee Performance	0.440	0.451	0.139	3.161	0.002
Leadership Style → Training	0.670	0.679	0.067	10.066	0.000
Training → Employee Performance	0.05	0.051	0.191	0.262	0.793
Leadership Style → Training → Employee Performance	0.033	0.036	0.132	0.254	0.800

Discussion

The Influence of Leadership Style on Employee Performance

This study demonstrates a positive and significant correlation between leadership style and employee performance. According to Veliu et al. (2017), a leader's approach to leadership is a crucial factor influencing employee performance. This suggests that the more effective the leadership style practiced by the leaders at the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency, the greater the improvement in employee performance. These findings are consistent with Bass and Avolio's (1994) transformational leadership theory, which posits that leaders who can inspire, motivate, and foster trust can enhance morale and elevate employee performance. Moreover, leaders who are fair, communicative, and serve as role models for professionalism encourage their subordinates to achieve optimal results. This study also aligns with Chua et al. (2018), who found that leadership style positively and significantly impacts employee performance. Likewise, the results empirically support Zanabazar et al. (2023), who asserted that leadership style enhances employees' sense of responsibility, loyalty, and performance. In the context of public sector organizations, a participatory leadership style can minimize bureaucratic rigidity and improve employee accountability for work outcomes (Sistiyan et al., 2019). Thus, leadership style serves as a vital element in fostering employee performance, emphasizing public service orientation and organizational efficiency.

The Influence of Leadership Style on Training

The results of this study indicate that leadership style has a positive and significant effect on training. This suggests that the better a leader's leadership style, the greater the attention and support for employee training (Sousa & Rocha, 2019). Leaders who are oriented towards learning and development, or learning-oriented leadership, encourage their subordinates to continuously update their knowledge and skills through training (Lundqvist et al., 2023). The role of a leader in training is not only limited to setting training programs but also includes moral support, selecting the right participants, and applying the results of training in the workplace. These results support the research of Ginting et al. (2024) and Maamari and Saheb (2018), who state that a leadership style that supports innovation and learning creates an organizational culture that encourages employee capacity building. In the context of the Transportation Agency, leaders who encourage technical and non-technical training play an important role in creating competent employees in the fields of transportation and public service.

The Impact of Training on Employee Performance

The results of the analysis show that training does not significantly affect employee performance. This indicates that the implementation of training at the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency has not been able to have a real impact on improving the employee performance. The insignificance of this relationship is partly due to training that is not relevant to the actual needs of employees' jobs, as training tends to be general and not based on an in-depth analysis of training needs. Furthermore, the lack of implementation of training knowledge in daily tasks, which arises from employees' difficulties in applying new skills due to an inflexible work system, also contributes to decreased performance. These results differ from Becker's (1918) human capital theory, which states that training can increase individual productivity. These findings also reject the hypotheses of previous studies conducted by Athar and Shah (2015), Sal and Raja (2016), and Pramono and Prahiawan (2022), which stated that training has a positive and significant impact on employee performance. This study reinforces the findings of Seidle et al. (2016) on a similar issue in the public sector, namely that training tends not to produce optimal results due to a lack of supervision and assessment after training. Furthermore, the results of this study are in line with the research by Mehale et al. (2021), Santoso et al. (2021), and Okumu et al. (2018), which show that training is not yet effective enough in improving employee performance. Thus, it can be concluded that training at the Yogyakarta Transportation Agency needs to be improved by focusing on strengthening technical skills and work behaviors that are directly relevant to the employee performance.

The Influence of Leadership Style on Employee Performance through Training

Mediation testing revealed that training did not mediate the relationship between leadership style and employee performance. This means that although leadership style has a strong direct influence on employee performance and training, its indirect influence on performance through training was not significant. These findings indicate that the influence of leadership style on employee performance at the Yogyakarta Transportation Agency occurs directly, not through training. This indicates that employees feel the impact of the motivation, direction, and example provided by leaders more than the training they participate in. These results are in line with the research by Al Mansoori and Aizat (2023), which states that the mediating effect of training can weaken if the training is poorly planned. In public organizations, training is often conducted as a routine annual program without any in-depth evaluation of its benefits (Rafiq, 2015). Thus, leaders' role in improving employee performance is greater directly through a communicative, inspirational, and consistent leadership style in employee development than through training.

5. Conclusion

The study's findings indicate that not all the proposed hypotheses were supported. The results revealed that leadership style positively and significantly impacted employee performance at the Yogyakarta City Transportation Agency. Leaders who provide clear direction, motivation, and act as role models enhance employee morale and productivity. Furthermore, leadership style positively influenced training, implying that leaders play a crucial role in promoting training initiatives for the development of employee competency. However, training itself did not significantly affect employee performance, suggesting that current training programs may not align well with job demands or are not effectively implemented within the workplace. Consequently, training failed to mediate the relationship between leadership style and employee performance. Overall, the research highlights that leadership exerts a stronger direct influence on improving employee performance than training. Therefore, it is essential to enhance the quality of training so that it becomes more relevant, well-structured, and integrated with actual work practices to better support leadership effectiveness in improving employee performance. Future researchers are advised to expand similar studies by including additional variables, such as organizational culture, communication, and motivation, as predictors of employee performance.

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