

The Impact of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance: Mediating Role of Meaningful Work

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ARTICLE HISTORY

Received: November 18, 2025

Revised: February 13, 2026

Accepted: February 21, 2026

DOI

<https://doi.org/10.52970/grdis.v6i2.1869>

ABSTRACT

Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping employees' perceptions of work and performance, particularly in public sector organizations. However, empirical findings on the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance remain inconclusive, indicating the need to examine underlying psychological mechanisms. This study aims to analyze the effect of transformational leadership on employee performance, both directly and indirectly through meaningful work as a mediating variable. This study employs a quantitative explanatory approach using a survey method. Data were collected from employees of the Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat Office and analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). The measurement model was evaluated through validity and reliability testing. In contrast, the structural model was assessed using path coefficients, coefficient of determination (R^2), and significance testing to examine both direct and indirect effects. The results indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant direct effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.624$; $p < 0.001$). In addition, transformational leadership positively and significantly influences meaningful work ($\beta = 0.965$; $p < 0.001$), and meaningful work has a positive and significant effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.359$; $p = 0.047$). Meaningful work significantly mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance ($\beta = 0.346$; $p = 0.046$), indicating that leadership effectiveness is strengthened when employees perceive their work as meaningful. These findings demonstrate that transformational leadership enhances employee performance not only through direct influence but also by fostering meaningful work as a psychological mechanism. The study highlights the importance of integrating leadership practices with efforts to strengthen employees' sense of purpose and intrinsic motivation to achieve sustainable performance improvement in public sector organizations.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership, Meaningful Work, Employee Performance, Public Sector Organizations.

I. Introduction

Employee performance refers to the outcomes or accomplishments of employees in fulfilling their assigned duties. It reflects the patterns of work over a specific period within an organization. Organizations with productive employees are more likely to achieve success, as individual and group performance is closely



linked to overall organizational performance (Habeahan, 2023). Transformational leadership plays a key role in shaping employee performance by motivating employees to exceed their usual output. Leaders adopting this style enhance subordinates' self-confidence and foster better work outcomes. This approach encourages innovation and maximizes individual and organizational potential. Transformational leaders clarify goals, roles, and task expectations while inspiring followers to transcend personal interests, achieve collective objectives, and demonstrate commitment. Their practice combines individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and charismatic influence. Meaningful work functions as a psychological mechanism that strengthens the impact of transformational leadership on performance. Leonardo et al. (2023) note that meaningful work is essential to mediate this relationship fully. Employees who perceive their work as meaningful are more motivated, committed, and engaged, whereas the absence of meaningful work can lead to disengagement and loss of alignment with organizational values (Sandoghdar & Bailey, 2025; Samo & Keith, 2025).

The Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat Office coordinates, administers, and provides technical government services to support the Governor's duties. It assists in policy formulation, program coordination, and guidance to regional agencies to ensure effective governance. The Secretariat oversees administrative functions in planning, finance, organization, governance, and human resources, serving as a central hub that aligns provincial operations with the strategic vision, mission, and development goals. Interviews and observations reveal that employees demonstrate strong performance in discipline, cooperation, and target achievement. Creativity, technological competence, and adaptability remain areas requiring development. Challenges such as underutilization of human resources, limited adoption of information technology, and structural coordination issues highlight the need for comprehensive improvement strategies. Strengthening skills, optimizing systems, and fostering innovation are essential to achieving sustainable organizational performance. This study investigates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance, with meaningful work as a mediating factor at the Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat Office. The findings aim to make theoretical contributions to public sector leadership and to offer practical recommendations for enhancing value-based, psychologically informed bureaucratic performance management systems.

II. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership plays a crucial role in organizational effectiveness by providing vision, direction, and motivation that encourage employees to exceed standard performance expectations. This leadership style emphasizes inspiring followers, stimulating innovative thinking, and addressing individual employee needs, thereby fostering a supportive, high-performance work environment. In complex organizational contexts, particularly within public sector institutions, transformational leaders are expected to guide employees through change, promote adaptability, and align individual goals with organizational objectives (Laksono et al., 2022). Leadership has consistently been identified as a key determinant of employee satisfaction. Sari et al. (2024) define leadership as a process through which leaders influence and guide employees toward achieving organizational goals. Empirical evidence further indicates that organizational success, especially in public institutions, is strongly influenced by leadership quality as reflected in employee performance outcomes (Febriantina et al., 2025).

2.2. Key Indicators of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is commonly conceptualized in terms of four core dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. These dimensions capture the leader's role as a role model, motivator, innovator, and mentor, respectively. Together,

they represent a leadership approach that encourages employees to develop greater commitment, creativity, and responsibility (Harsono & Hidayat, 2025).

2.3. Employee Performance

Performance is a process by which an organization evaluates and assesses employee performance. Therefore, every employee who has worked in a position expects career advancement and skill development that will benefit both the individual and the organization (Fitriani et al., 2024). According to Susilo et al. (2024), the term performance derives from the terms Job Performance or Actual Performance, meaning that performance is the quality and quantity of work results achieved by an employee in carrying out their duties in accordance with the responsibilities given to them. Nurastuti et al. (2024) define performance as the work results of an employee during a specific period, compared against predetermined standards, targets, objectives, or criteria. Within the public sector, performance is closely linked to accountability, service quality, and adherence to ethical and professional standards. Effective performance management, therefore, requires not only technical competence but also positive work attitudes and behaviors.

2.4. Employee Performance Indicators

In the context of civil service performance management, employee performance is assessed through work behavior indicators that reflect professionalism and organizational values. These indicators include service orientation, commitment, work initiative, cooperation, and leadership. Rather than focusing solely on quantitative targets, this approach emphasizes behavioral quality in daily work activities, ensuring that performance evaluation aligns with public service ethics and organizational culture.

2.5. Meaningful Work

Meaningful work refers to employees' perceptions that their work is valuable, purposeful, and contributes to a greater good. Steger et al. (2012) describe meaningful work as the experience of positive meaning in work, the sense that work serves as a central source of life meaning, and the belief that one's work benefits others or society. In organizational research, meaningful work is increasingly recognized as a critical psychological factor that enhances motivation, engagement, and well-being. Meaningful work integrates personal values, self-development, and social contribution, reflecting both individual fulfillment and collective purpose in the workplace. (Tan, 2023).

2.6. Meaningful Work Dimensions

Rosso et al. (2010) conceptualize meaningful work through seven interrelated dimensions: Authenticity, Self-Efficacy, Self-Esteem, Purpose, Ownership, Transcendence, and Cultural and Interpersonal Sensemaking. These dimensions explain how employees interpret their work experiences and attach meaning to their roles. In bureaucratic environments, such as public sector institutions, these dimensions are particularly relevant in shaping employee attitudes, commitment, and performance.

2.7. Conceptual Framework

This study is grounded in the assumption that employee performance in public sector organizations is influenced not only by structural and administrative factors but also by leadership quality and employees' psychological experiences. Transformational leadership is expected to enhance employee performance, both directly and indirectly, by fostering meaningful work. Meaningful work is therefore positioned as a mediating variable that explains how leadership practices translate into improved performance outcomes.

Based on theoretical arguments and empirical evidence, the conceptual framework proposes that transformational leadership positively influences meaningful work and employee performance. In contrast, meaningful work further strengthens employee performance. The flow of thought in this research can be visualized through the following model:

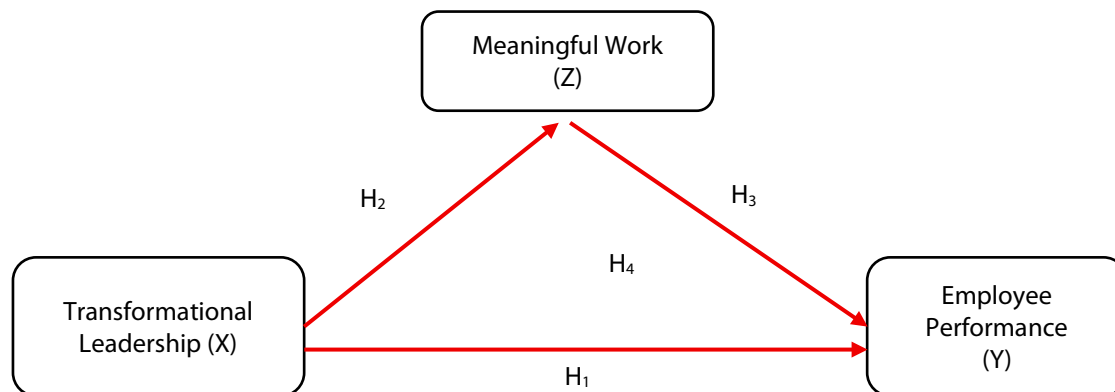


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Transformational Leadership, Meaningful Work, and Employee Performance

The figure illustrates the hypothesized relationships among transformational leadership, meaningful work, and employee performance. Transformational leadership is expected to have a direct effect on employee performance and an indirect effect through meaningful work as a mediating variable.

2.8. Hypothesis Development and Formulation

2.8.1. The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance

Transformational leadership has been a significant focus in various management studies due to its powerful influence on improving employee performance. The transformational leadership theory proposed by Bernard M. Bass & Wahjoedi (2021) states that transformational leadership can transform organizations by motivating and inspiring their followers. Thus, leaders act as agents of change, not only managing but also transforming employee values, motivations, and behaviors, ultimately driving performance improvement. Anam & Mukaffi's (2020) research suggests that transformational leadership influences employee performance both directly and indirectly. Their study showed that transformational leadership not only has a direct and significant impact on improving employee performance but also, through motivation as a mediating variable, indirectly affects it. These findings provide empirical evidence for upcoming research examining the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance through meaningful work as a mediator. Through this approach, transformational leadership not only encourages goal achievement but also fosters personal growth.

H1: Transformational leadership influences employee performance

2.8.2. The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Meaningful Work

Transformational leadership is an effective leadership style for enhancing meaningful work across various organizational contexts, including the public sector, such as the Regional Secretary's Office of Gorontalo Provincial. Based on Bernard M. Bass's theory of transformational leadership, Harsoyo (2022) and Hidayat (2025) state that transformational leadership is a leader's ability to continuously inspire, motivate, and

empower employees through four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration. Research by Anam & Mukaffi (2020) suggests that, in theory, motivation and meaningful work are closely related. Work motivation is one aspect that can grow from the meaning an individual feels towards their work. In this context, meaningful work can serve as an internalization of work values, encouraging employees to work more optimally and functioning in parallel to motivation in Anam and Mukaffi's study. If motivation can mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance, it is reasonable to predict that meaningful work can also play a similar mediating role, even more deeply, oriented towards the psychological meaning of work. Transformational leadership not only encourages the achievement of work targets but also fosters work experiences that are personally and emotionally valuable to employees.

H2: Transformational leadership influences meaningful work

2.8.3. The Influence of Meaningful Work on Employee Performance

Meaningful work is an individual's perception that their work has personal meaning and value, and that it makes a real contribution both personally and socially (Rosso et al., 2010). When employees perceive their work as meaningful, they are more likely to demonstrate commitment, enthusiasm, and dedication to their tasks, which are characteristics of high performance. This ultimately impacts the quality and productivity of work, reflecting overall employee performance. Meaningful work experiences are an important psychological factor in driving optimal performance in an organizational environment.

H3: Meaningful work influences employee performance

2.8.4. The Influence of Meaningful Work as a Mediator between Transformational Leadership and Employee Performance

Transformational leadership and employee performance, emphasizing inspiration, motivation, and the development of individual potential, can foster a sense of meaningful work among employees. When employees perceive their work as valuable and meaningful, they are more motivated to perform at their best. Agustina (2020) stated that meaningful work, encompassing the dimensions of authenticity, self-efficacy, self-esteem, purpose, belonging, transcendence, culture, and interpersonal feelings, along with the totality of work (passion, dedication, and immersion), accounts for 54% of work-life balance. This shows that the perception of meaning in work not only affects the individual internally but also significantly influences overall well-being and work effectiveness. Meaningful work variable can be positioned as a mediating variable that bridges the influence of transformational leadership style on employee performance. H4: Meaningful work mediates the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance

III. Research Method

The object of this research is the focus of observation and analysis, encompassing three main variables: Transformational Leadership (X) as the independent variable, Employee Performance (Y) as the dependent variable, and Meaningful Work (Z) as the mediating variable. This study focuses on State Civil Apparatus (ASN) employed at the Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat Office, particularly those involved in operational activities and organizational decision-making processes. The selection of this research object is based on the critical role of leadership in shaping employees' perceptions of work meaningfulness, which ultimately influences their performance. Transformational leadership is assumed to play a strategic role in fostering a work environment that enhances intrinsic motivation, a sense of purpose, and commitment among public sector employees. Therefore, this study aims to provide empirical evidence on how transformational

leadership contributes to the creation of meaningful work and its subsequent impact on bureaucratic performance. This study employs a quantitative, explanatory research design to test and explain the causal relationships among transformational leadership, meaningful work, and employee performance. The relationships are examined objectively and measurably using numerical data, enabling statistical analysis through the SEM-PLS approach.

3.1. Research Population

Population of State Civil Apparatus (ASN) employed at the Regional Secretariat Office of Gorontalo Provincial who are actively involved in operational activities and organizational-level strategic decision-making. This population was selected because ASN personnel play a central role in implementing regional government functions and interact directly with the leadership system within the organizational environment. The research population is distributed across six government bureaus under the authority of the Regional Secretariat Office of the Province of Gorontalo. These bureaus represent diverse functional areas of public administration, thereby providing a comprehensive overview of leadership practices, perceptions of meaningful work, and employee performance within the institution. The distribution of ASN across the respective bureaus is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Population List

Work Unit/Bureau	Number of Civil Servants
Legal Bureau	23
Bureau of Government and Public Welfare	28
Bureau of Economic Control and Development	22
General Bureau	54
Organization Bureau	26
Bureau of Procurement of Goods and Services	35
Total	188

3.2. Research Sample

The sample size in this study was determined using the Slovin formula, as the total population size was known and the researcher required a specific level of precision for generalizing the data. According to Sugiyono (2017), the Slovin formula is used to determine the sample size for a population when its characteristics are homogeneous, and the population size is known with certainty. The Slovin formula is used with a 5% error rate, ($e = 0,05$), which is commonly considered acceptable in social science research. The formula is expressed as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N \times e^2}$$

Information:

n = Number of samples = 128

N = Total population = 188

E = Margin of error (in decimal, e.g. 0.05 for 5%)

Based on the total population (N) of 188 civil servants at the Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat Office and a margin of error of 5 percent ($e = 0,05$), the calculated sample size (n) There were 128 respondents. This sample size was deemed sufficient to represent the population and ensure the reliability of the research findings:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N \times e^2} = \frac{188}{1 + 188 (0,05)^2} = \frac{188}{1,47} = 127,89 = \mathbf{128}$$

The minimum required sample size was rounded up to 128 respondents. To ensure proportional representation of each work unit within the organization, this study employed the Proportionate Stratified Random Sampling technique. This method allows each work unit to be represented in the sample in proportion to its share of the total population, thereby enhancing the data's representativeness. According to Creswell (2018), stratified sampling is a sampling method that divides the population into subgroups (strata), after which random sampling is conducted within each stratum to ensure adequate representation. The proportional allocation of samples for each work unit was calculated using the following formula:

$$n_i = \frac{N_i}{N} \times n$$

Information:

n_i = number of samples in the i – th work unit – i

N_i = population size in work unit – i

N = total population

n = total number of samples

Based on the calculation results, the proportional sample distribution per work unit is shown in the following table 2.

Table 2. Proportional Sample Distribution Based on the Bureau

Work Unit/Bureau	Population Size (N_i)	Proportion (%)	Number of Samples (n_i)
Legal Bureau	23	12.23%	16
Bureau of Government and Public Welfare	28	14.89%	19
Bureau of Economic Control and Development	22	11.70%	15
General Bureau	54	28.73%	37
Organization Bureau	26	13.83%	18
Bureau of Procurement of Goods and Services	35	18.62 %	24
Total	188	100.00%	128

3.3. Data Collection and Research Instrument

Data collection was conducted in two stages. Preliminary data collection was carried out between January and February 2025 to identify research variables and refine the research instrument. The main data collection, including questionnaire distribution and retrieval, was conducted in September 2025 after obtaining official research permission from the Governor of Gorontalo through the National Unity and Politics Agency of Gorontalo Province. All measurement items were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The questionnaire was developed based on established sources. Transformational leadership indicators were adapted from Bass and Avolio; employee performance indicators were derived from Government Regulation of the Republic of Indonesia Number 30 of 2019 on Civil Servant Performance Appraisal; and meaningful work indicators were adapted from Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski.

3.4. Data Analysis and Hypothesis Testing Methods

The main analytical approach in this study is Structural Equation Modeling based on Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS). SEM-PLS was selected because it is suitable for predictive analysis and does not require strict assumptions of data normality, as is commonly required in conventional linear regression. Accordingly, the data analysis focused on evaluating the measurement model (outer model) and the structural model

(inner model), followed by hypothesis testing using the bootstrapping procedure to assess the significance of the relationships among variables.

IV. Results and Discussion

This study employed a questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument; therefore, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure the instrument's accuracy and consistency. The evaluation of the measurement model assessed the extent to which the observed indicators adequately represent their respective latent constructs. This step is essential to confirm that the measurement model meets the required quality criteria and is appropriate for further analysis of the structural relationships using the SEM-PLS approach.

4.1. Measurement Model (outer model)

4.1.1. Convergent Validity

Convergent validity was assessed by examining the correlation between indicator scores and their respective construct values, as reflected by the loading factor. A loading factor value greater than 0.70 indicates strong indicator reliability; however, in exploratory research, loading values ranging from 0.50 to 0.60 are considered acceptable (Abdillah & Hartono, 2015). The results show that all indicators exhibit loading factor values exceeding the recommended threshold. All constructs achieve Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values greater than 0.50, indicating that each construct explains a substantial proportion of variance in its indicators. These findings confirm that the measurement model satisfies the criteria for convergent validity. The detailed loading factor results for each indicator are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Convergent Validity (Factor Loadings)

Variables	Indicators	Factor Loadings	Conclusion
Transformational Leadership (X)	Idealized Influence (X1.1)	0.846	Valid
	Inspirational Motivation (X1.2)	0.971	
	Intellectual Stimulation (X1.3)	0.972	
	Individualized Consideration (X1.4)	0.976	
Employee Performance (Y)	Service Orientation (Y1.1)	0.999	Valid
	Commitment (Y1.2)	0.999	
	Work Initiative (Y1.3)	0.985	
	Cooperation (Y1.4)	0.981	
	Leadership (Y1.5)	0.994	
Meaningful Work (Z)	Authenticity (Z1.1)	0.968	Valid
	Self-Efficacy (Z1.2)	0.964	
	Self-Esteem (Z1.3)	0.960	
	Goal (Z1.4)	0.965	
	Ownership (Z1.5)	0.839	
	Transcendence (Z1.6)	0.933	
	Cultural Sensing and Interpersonal (Z1.7)	0.959	

The results in Table 3 demonstrate that the measurement model exhibits strong convergent validity, as all indicators show adequate alignment with their respective latent constructs. This indicates that each construct is measured consistently and captures the intended theoretical domain of the study. These findings confirm that the indicators collectively represent their underlying constructs coherently, supporting the appropriateness of the measurement model for further analysis. Consequently, the constructs of

transformational leadership, meaningful work, and employee performance can be reliably used in the structural model to examine the proposed relationships.

4.1.2. Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was assessed to ensure that each construct is empirically distinct from the others. This assessment was conducted by examining the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values and applying the Fornell–Larcker Criterion. As presented in Table 4, all constructs exhibit AVE values greater than the recommended threshold of 0.50, indicating that each construct can capture a substantial proportion of variance from its indicators. The Fornell–Larcker Criterion shows that the square root of the AVE for each construct exceeds its correlations with other constructs, confirming adequate discriminant validity.

Table 4. Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

Variables	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Transformational Leadership (X)	0.890
Employee Performance (Y)	0.888
Meaningful Work (Z)	0.983

Table 4 presents the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for each construct, indicating the extent to which each construct explains the variance of its indicators. To further assess discriminant validity, the Fornell–Larcker Criterion was applied by comparing the square root of the AVE for each construct with its correlations with other constructs. The results of this comparison are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Fornell–Larcker Criterion (AVE Root Values)

Latent Variables	AVE Root
Transformational Leadership (X)	0.943
Employee Performance (Y)	0.992
Meaningful Work (Z)	0.942

The results indicate that the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct is higher than its correlations with other latent constructs. This finding satisfies the Fornell–Larcker criterion, confirming that each construct captures a greater proportion of variance from its indicators than from indicators of other constructs. Therefore, transformational leadership, meaningful work, and employee performance can be considered empirically distinct, indicating that the measurement model demonstrates adequate discriminant validity.

4.1.3. Composite Reliability

In addition to validity testing, the reliability of the constructs was evaluated using composite reliability. A composite reliability value greater than 0.70 indicates satisfactory internal consistency. The results of the composite reliability analysis are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Composite Reliability

Variables	Composite Reliability	Information
Transformational Leadership (X)	0.970	
Employee Performance (Y)	0.997	(Reliable)
Meaningful Work (Z)	0.982	

Based on Table 6, all constructs exhibit composite reliability values exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70, indicating satisfactory internal consistency. These results confirm that all measurement constructs are reliable and appropriate for subsequent structural model analysis.

4.2. Structural Model (Inner model)

After evaluating the measurement model, the next step is to assess the structural model by examining the coefficient of determination (R^2) for each endogenous construct. The R^2 value indicates the proportion of variance in an endogenous construct that can be explained by its associated exogenous constructs, thereby reflecting the explanatory power of the structural model. Based on the data processing results, the R^2 values for each construct are presented in the following table.

Table 7. Coefficient of Determination (R^2) of the Structural Model

Variables	R-square	R-square adjusted
Meaningful Work (Z)	0.931	0.930
Employee Performance (Y)	0.949	0.949

Based on Table 7, the R^2 value indicates that transformational leadership (X) and meaningful work (Z) jointly explain 94.9% of the variance in employee performance (Y). In comparison, the remaining 5.1% is attributable to other variables not included in this study. Meanwhile, the R^2 value for meaningful work (Z) indicates that transformational leadership (X) explains 93.1% of the variance in employees' perceptions of meaningful work, with the remaining 6.9% attributable to factors outside the proposed model.

4.3. Results of Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS)

Data analysis in this study was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Partial Least Squares (PLS) approach, supported by SmartPLS software. The evaluation of the outer model (measurement model) indicates that all constructs meet the criteria for validity and reliability. The assessment of the inner model (structural model) demonstrates that the proposed relationships among variables are statistically significant and exhibit strong explanatory power. Empirical results confirm that the measurement instruments are appropriate and that the structural relationships among transformational leadership, meaningful work, and employee performance are well supported by the data. A summary of the research findings is illustrated in the following structural path model. In summary, the research results can be described through the following structural path model:

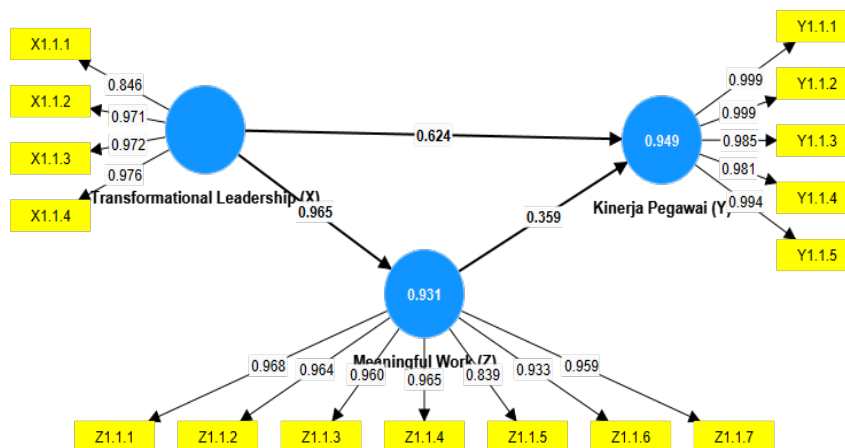


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Algorithm Results of the Research Model

Figure 2 illustrates the PLS-SEM structural model, presenting the standardized path coefficients among transformational leadership, meaningful work, and employee performance, along with the coefficient of determination (R^2) for each endogenous construct. The results show that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on meaningful work and employee performance. At the same time, meaningful work also positively and significantly influences employee performance. The model demonstrates strong explanatory power, as indicated by the high R^2 values for meaningful work (0.931) and employee performance (0.949), suggesting that the empirical data well support the proposed structural relationships. Based on Figure 2, the structural equations of the SEM model can be expressed as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} Z &= 0.965X + e_1 \quad (R^2 = 0.931) \\ Y &= 0.624X + 0.359Z + e_2 \quad (R^2 = 0.949) \end{aligned}$$

These equations indicate that transformational leadership (X) has a strong positive effect on meaningful work (Z), while both transformational leadership and meaningful work positively contribute to employee performance (Y). The high R^2 values suggest that the structural model has strong explanatory power in explaining variations in meaningful work and employee performance.

4.4. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the direction and significance of the relationships among the research variables in accordance with the proposed hypotheses. The analysis employed the SmartPLS bootstrapping procedure to estimate standardized path coefficients, T-statistics, and P-values. A relationship is considered statistically significant when the P-value is less than 0.05. The detailed results of the hypothesis testing are presented in the following table. The results of the hypothesis testing are presented in the following table:

Table 8. Direct Effect Structure

Construct	Direct Effect	P Value	Note*)	Decision
X --->Y	0.624	0.000	Positive and Significant	
X --->Z	0.965	0.000	Positive and Significant	Accepted
Z--->Y	0.359	0.047	Positive and Significant	

*) Significant at a significance test level of 5% (0.05) if the P Value <= 0.05

Based on Table 8, all direct relationships among the research variables are positive and statistically significant, as indicated by P-values below 0.05. Transformational leadership (X) has a significant positive effect on employee performance (Y), indicating that leadership practices characterized by inspiration, motivation, and individual consideration directly enhance employees' work outcomes. In addition, transformational leadership shows a powerful positive influence on meaningful work (Z), suggesting that effective leadership plays a critical role in shaping employees' perceptions of purpose and value in their work. Meaningful work also has a significant positive effect on employee performance, confirming its role as an important psychological driver of performance improvement. Next, the structure of indirect influence between variables, showing the mediation mechanism through intervening variables, is presented in the following table:

Table 9. Indirect Effect Structures

Construct	Indirect Effect	P Value	Note*)	Decision
X --->Y mediates Z	0.346	0.046	Positive and Significant	Accepted

*) Significant at a significance test level of 5% (0.05) if the P Value <= 0.05

Source: Processed data, 2025

Table 9 makes it easier to understand how exogenous variables can influence endogenous variables through mediator pathways. These results suggest that meaningful work functions as an important psychological mechanism that strengthens the impact of transformational leadership on employee performance. When leaders succeed in fostering a sense of purpose, value, and significance in employees' work, the positive influence of leadership on performance becomes stronger and more sustainable. Therefore, meaningful work plays a crucial mediating role in translating transformational leadership practices into improved employee performance outcomes.

4.5. Research Discussion

4.5.1. Transformational Leadership (X) has a positive and significant influence on employee performance (Y) at the Regional Secretariat Office of Gorontalo Provincial

Transformational leadership has a positive and significant impact on employee performance at the Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat Office. The findings indicate that the core dimensions of transformational leadership, idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, are well reflected in the organizational context. Respondents rated these indicators highly, particularly intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, which play an important role in encouraging employees to perform better, take greater responsibility, and maintain a strong focus on achieving work outcomes. These leadership behaviors foster a supportive and motivating work environment that enhances employees' commitment and task engagement. Consistent with these findings, a study by Sari, Rahman, and Yusuf (2023) in government organizations concluded that transformational leadership is a key determinant of employee performance, particularly through the development of a positive work culture and strengthened organizational commitment. Employees who feel appreciated, supported, and actively involved in the work process tend to demonstrate higher motivation and better performance. Together, these findings reinforce the empirical evidence that transformational leadership plays a strategic role in improving employee performance, particularly in local government and public-sector environments.

4.5.2. Transformational Leadership (X) has a positive and significant influence on meaningful work at the Regional Secretariat Office of Gorontalo Provincial

The research results indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant influence on meaningful work at the Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat Office. Leadership behaviors such as inspirational motivation and idealized influence are clearly reflected in helping employees understand organizational goals and the broader purpose of their work. In addition, individualized consideration ensures that employees' needs, potential, and personal aspirations are acknowledged and supported. This leadership approach enhances employees' perceptions of work value and purpose, leading them to feel more appreciated and intrinsically motivated in their roles. These findings are consistent with Ghadi et al. (2013), who argue that transformational leadership enables employees to recognize personal meaning and social contribution in their work. Furthermore, Kaya & Karatepe (2020) support this view by demonstrating that transformational leadership strengthens intrinsic motivation, trust in leaders, and commitment to the organization's mission, all of which contribute to stronger perceptions of meaningful work. Collectively, these studies reinforce the role of transformational leadership as a critical driver of meaningful work within organizational settings.

4.5.3. Meaningful Work (Z) has a positive and significant influence on employee performance (Y) at the Regional Secretariat Office of Gorontalo Provincial

The study found that meaningful work has a positive and significant impact on employee performance at the Regional Secretariat Office of Gorontalo Provincial. The measurement results show that employees perceive their work as meaningful through indicators such as authenticity, self-efficacy, self-esteem, purpose, ownership, transcendence, and cultural and interpersonal sensing. These dimensions reflect employees' internalization of work values, which contribute to higher intrinsic motivation, stronger dedication, and a clear orientation toward achieving high-quality work outcomes. These findings are supported by Steger (2022), who states that meaningful work enhances intrinsic motivation, work engagement, and overall performance. Similarly, Fairlie (2021) emphasizes that meaningful work improves psychological well-being, which, in turn, directly influences productivity. In bureaucratic and public-sector contexts, particularly within provincial government institutions, meaningful work is a critical psychological factor that strengthens employee performance by fostering internal motivation, a sense of responsibility, and a strong commitment to public service.

4.5.4. Meaningful Work (Z) can mediate Transformational Leadership (X), which has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance at the Regional Secretariat Office of Gorontalo Provincial

The research results indicate that meaningful work mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance at the Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat Office. Leadership practices that emphasize inspiration, motivation, and individual consideration foster a stronger sense of meaning in employees' work. When employees perceive their work as important, purposeful, and tangibly contributing to organizational goals, they are more likely to demonstrate greater dedication, intrinsic motivation, and a stronger focus on work quality. These findings are consistent with Ghadi, Fernando, and Caputi (2013), who emphasized the role of transformational leadership in fostering intrinsic motivation and work commitment. Similarly, Bono & Judge (2013) highlighted the indirect effect of leadership on performance through employees' perceptions of meaningful work. Rosso, Dekas, and Wrzesniewski (2010) also stated that meaningful work functions as a mediating mechanism that strengthens the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. Overall, this study confirms that transformational leadership is more effective in enhancing employee performance when it operates through the development of meaningful work.

V. Conclusion

Based on the research results and discussion in the previous chapter, it can be concluded that transformational leadership has both direct and indirect influences on employee performance at the Regional Secretariat Office of Gorontalo Provincial. Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. At the same time, it has been shown to have a positive, significant effect on meaningful work, indicating that the implementation of transformational leadership enhances employees' perceptions of work meaningfulness. Meaningful work has a positive, significant effect on employee performance, as reflected in increased service orientation, commitment, initiative, cooperation, and leadership. Meaningful work acts as a mediating variable, strengthening the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance, indicating that transformational leadership becomes more effective when employees can interpret their work positively. Overall, meaningful work represents an important psychological mechanism that drives intrinsic motivation, commitment, and the sustained quality of employee performance.

This study provides theoretical contributions to the development of public sector human resource management by examining the relationship between transformational leadership, meaningful work, and

employee performance at the Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat Office through the perspectives of Self Determination Theory (SDT), Social Exchange Theory (SET) as the grand theory, and Leader Member Exchange (LMX).

The findings demonstrate that transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on meaningful work, thereby reinforcing SDT, which emphasizes the fulfillment of employees' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Inspirational leadership practices oriented toward individual development enable employees to experience greater purpose and value in their work, supporting the role of transformational leadership in fostering intrinsic motivation. The results also strengthen SET and highlight reciprocity in workplace relationships. Leaders' attention, support, and fair treatment are perceived as positive organizational exchanges that encourage employees to reciprocate through constructive work attitudes, including stronger perceptions of meaningful work and improved performance. In addition, this study extends the relevance of LMX by demonstrating that high-quality leader employee relationships not only influence job satisfaction and commitment but also play a crucial role in shaping meaningful work as a psychological outcome. Importantly, this study empirically positions meaningful work as a central psychological mechanism through which transformational leadership influences employee performance. This finding extends existing leadership models by emphasizing that leadership effectiveness in public sector bureaucratic settings is not solely driven by formal authority or direct leader-member interactions, but also by leaders' ability to cultivate employees' subjective interpretations of work values and purpose. These findings confirm that the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance is better understood through integrated motivational, relational, and meaning-based mechanisms rather than through direct effects alone.

The managerial implications of this study confirm that improving employee performance at the Gorontalo Provincial Secretariat Office can be effectively achieved through strengthening transformational leadership and fostering meaningful work as a key psychological mechanism. Leaders need to enhance their transformational leadership practices focused on motivation, role modeling, and individual coaching, as these have been empirically proven to influence meaningful work and employee performance positively. Management should develop systematic strategies to strengthen meaningful work by clarifying work goals, reinforcing public service contributions, and fostering employees' sense of ownership toward the organization, given its significant role in improving performance. Non-material appreciation and recognition should also be institutionalized to strengthen intrinsic motivation and employees' perceptions of work value. In addition, building a collaborative and inclusive work culture is essential, as meaningful work is shaped not only by task characteristics but also by positive social interactions within the organization. In bureaucratic settings, the effectiveness of transformational leadership can be further strengthened when clear work targets, consistent procedures, and proportional control mechanisms support it.

VI. Limitation and Future Research Agenda

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings. First, the data were collected using a self-administered questionnaire, which relies on respondents' subjective perceptions and may be subject to common-method bias or social desirability bias. Second, the study was conducted at a single public-sector institution, namely the Regional Secretariat Office of Gorontalo Province, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other public- or private-sector organizations with different structural and cultural characteristics/ Future research is therefore encouraged to involve multiple public sector institutions or comparative settings to enhance external validity. In addition, longitudinal designs or mixed-method approaches, such as interviews or qualitative observations, could provide deeper insights into the dynamic relationships among transformational leadership, meaningful work, and employee performance over time. Future research is encouraged to expand the scope of this study by involving multiple public sector institutions to improve the generalizability of the findings. Future studies may also incorporate additional psychological or organizational variables, such as organizational culture, job demands, employee

well-being, or work engagement, to further explain variations in employee performance. Moreover, longitudinal or mixed-methods research designs are recommended to yield more profound insights into the dynamic relationships among transformational leadership, meaningful work, and employee performance over time. These extensions are expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying leadership effectiveness in public sector organizations.

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