

Transformational Leadership and Work Stress as Determinants of Educational Staff Performance in Higher Education: Evidence from Universitas Negeri Manado

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ABSTRACT

Employee performance is a key factor that determines the effectiveness of organizational management, particularly in higher education institutions where administrative and academic services require high levels of efficiency and professionalism. Educational staff play an important role in supporting the implementation of academic activities and institutional governance. Therefore, understanding the factors that influence their performance is essential. This study aims to analyze the influence of transformational leadership and work stress on the performance of educational staff at Universitas Negeri Manado. This research employed a quantitative approach using a causal associative design. The population consisted of 235 educational staff members, from which a sample of 70 respondents was selected using the Slovin formula and simple random sampling technique. Data were collected through questionnaires using a Likert scale and analyzed using multiple linear regression with the assistance of SPSS software. The results indicate that transformational leadership has a significant influence on employee performance. Meanwhile, work stress also shows a significant relationship with performance, indicating that the level of stress experienced by employees can influence their work outcomes. Furthermore, the simultaneous analysis reveals that transformational leadership and work stress jointly affect the performance of educational staff. The findings suggest that leadership practices and stress management are important factors in improving employee performance within higher education institutions. Therefore, universities are encouraged to strengthen transformational leadership practices and implement effective stress management strategies to enhance organizational performance.

Keywords: Employee Performance, Higher Education, Transformational Leadership, Work Stress.

INTRODUCTION

Higher education institutions play a strategic role in the development of human resources and the advancement of science, technology, and innovation. Universities are not only responsible for delivering academic programs but also for supporting research activities and community engagement as part of the tri dharma of higher education. The effectiveness of these functions is highly dependent on the quality and performance of human resources within the institution. While academic staff are responsible for teaching and research activities, educational staff serve as the backbone of administrative and operational processes that ensure the smooth functioning of the university. Educational staff are responsible for various administrative, technical, and support services that facilitate academic and institutional activities. Their duties include managing academic administration, supporting financial and personnel management, maintaining institutional records, and providing services to students and faculty members. As such, the performance of educational staff directly influences the efficiency and effectiveness of university management. High levels of employee performance contribute to improved service quality, faster administrative processes, and greater institutional competitiveness. Employee performance can generally be defined as the level of achievement demonstrated by individuals in carrying out their assigned tasks and responsibilities within a specific period. Performance is commonly measured through several dimensions, including work quality, work quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, and independence in completing tasks. In the context of higher education institutions, optimal employee performance is essential to ensure that academic and administrative processes run efficiently and support the achievement of institutional goals.

Despite the importance of employee performance, many organizations continue to face challenges related to maintaining high levels of productivity and efficiency among employees. In the higher education sector, educational staff often encounter complex administrative responsibilities, increasing technological demands, and changing organizational policies. These conditions may affect their motivation and productivity, thereby influencing their overall performance. One of the factors that can significantly influence employee performance is leadership. Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping organizational culture, motivating employees, and directing organizational activities toward achieving institutional goals. Among various leadership styles, transformational leadership has gained considerable attention in organizational and management studies due to its positive impact on employee motivation and performance. Transformational leadership refers to a leadership style in which leaders inspire and motivate their followers to achieve higher levels of performance by transforming their attitudes, beliefs, and values. Transformational leaders create a compelling vision of the future, encourage innovation and creativity, and provide individualized support to employees. This leadership style is characterized by four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

Through idealized influence, leaders act as role models and demonstrate integrity and commitment to organizational goals. Inspirational motivation involves communicating a clear and inspiring vision that encourages employees to perform beyond expectations. Intellectual stimulation encourages employees to think creatively and challenge traditional assumptions, while individualized consideration focuses on providing personal attention and support to employees in their professional development. In organizational settings, transformational leadership has been widely associated with positive outcomes such as increased employee engagement, higher job satisfaction, improved organizational commitment, and enhanced performance. Leaders who adopt

transformational leadership behaviors are more likely to create a supportive work environment where employees feel valued and motivated to contribute to organizational success. However, leadership is not the only factor influencing employee performance. Another important factor is work stress. Work stress is a psychological and physiological response that occurs when employees perceive an imbalance between job demands and their ability to cope with those demands. In many organizational contexts, employees are required to meet tight deadlines, manage complex tasks, and adapt to organizational changes, all of which may contribute to increased stress levels. Work stress can arise from various sources, including excessive workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, interpersonal relationships, and unfavorable working conditions. In higher education institutions, educational staff may experience stress due to administrative workload, time pressure during academic periods, technological changes, and organizational restructuring. If not managed properly, these stressors can negatively affect employee well-being and performance.

While moderate levels of stress may sometimes enhance productivity by stimulating motivation and focus, excessive stress can have detrimental effects on employee performance. High levels of stress may lead to fatigue, decreased concentration, emotional exhaustion, and reduced job satisfaction. These conditions can ultimately reduce employee productivity and hinder organizational effectiveness. In the context of higher education institutions, managing work stress is particularly important because administrative efficiency directly affects the quality of academic services provided to students and faculty members. Poor administrative performance can lead to delays in academic processes, reduced service quality, and dissatisfaction among stakeholders. Universitas Negeri Manado, as one of the public universities in Indonesia, relies on the contribution of educational staff to support its academic and administrative functions. As the institution continues to grow and modernize its systems, the demands placed on educational staff have also increased. These demands require employees to maintain high levels of performance while adapting to technological and organizational changes. Preliminary observations indicate that several challenges related to employee performance may exist within the institution. These challenges include delays in administrative processes, inconsistencies in employee attendance, limited initiative in completing tasks, and complaints regarding the responsiveness of administrative services. Such conditions suggest that there may be underlying organizational factors influencing employee performance.

Given the importance of leadership and work environment in shaping employee behavior, examining the influence of transformational leadership and work stress becomes highly relevant. Transformational leadership may help employees cope with job demands by providing guidance, motivation, and support, while effective stress management can prevent negative outcomes associated with excessive workload and pressure. Previous studies have shown that transformational leadership positively influences employee performance, while work stress often has a negative impact on productivity. However, the relationship between these variables may vary depending on organizational context, cultural factors, and institutional characteristics. Therefore, empirical studies in specific organizational settings are necessary to better understand these relationships. Despite the growing body of research on leadership and work stress, limited studies have focused on educational staff within higher education institutions in Indonesia, particularly in regional universities. Most previous studies have examined corporate organizations or government institutions, leaving a gap in understanding how leadership and work stress influence employee performance in university settings.

Therefore, this study aims to analyze the influence of transformational leadership and work stress on the performance of educational staff at Universitas Negeri Manado. By examining these relationships, this research is expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of educational management and organizational behavior. In addition, the findings of this study may provide practical insights for university leaders in designing effective leadership strategies and stress management programs to improve employee performance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership

Leadership is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing employee behavior, motivation, and organizational performance. Among various leadership approaches, transformational leadership has been extensively studied due to its significant impact on employee development and organizational effectiveness. Transformational leadership refers to a leadership style in which leaders inspire and motivate followers to exceed their expected performance by transforming their attitudes, values, and beliefs toward organizational goals. According to Bass and Riggio, transformational leadership involves a process whereby leaders stimulate followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes while developing their own leadership capacity (Bass & Riggio, 2020). Similarly, Northouse defines transformational leadership as a process through which leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. In organizational contexts, transformational leaders encourage employees to transcend personal interests for the sake of the organization by creating a compelling vision and fostering a supportive working environment. The transformational leadership model proposed by Bass and Avolio identifies four main dimensions, commonly referred to as the “Four I’s”: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Idealized influence refers to the leader’s role as a charismatic role model who demonstrates integrity and commitment. Inspirational motivation involves the leader’s ability to articulate an inspiring vision and motivate employees toward achieving organizational objectives. Intellectual stimulation encourages employees to think creatively and challenge existing assumptions, while individualized consideration focuses on providing personal support and attention to employees’ individual needs and development.

Transformational leadership is closely related to the Full Range Leadership Theory, which suggests that effective leaders utilize behaviors that inspire followers and enhance their intrinsic motivation. Leaders who adopt transformational behaviors tend to build trust, stimulate employee engagement, and strengthen organizational commitment. Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that transformational leadership positively influences employee performance. For example, research conducted by Trang and Thang found that transformational leadership significantly improves employee performance in educational institutions by strengthening employee motivation and commitment. Likewise, Supriyanto and Ekowati reported that transformational leadership contributes significantly to improved employee productivity in higher education settings. In the context of higher education institutions, transformational leadership is particularly important because universities require adaptive leadership capable of encouraging innovation, collaboration, and organizational learning. Leaders who apply transformational leadership practices are able to create an environment that supports professional development and improves employee performance.

Work Stress

Work stress is another important factor that influences employee behavior and performance in organizational settings. Work stress can be defined as a psychological and physiological response that occurs when individuals perceive an imbalance between job demands and their ability to cope with those demands. Stress arises when employees experience excessive pressure, workload, or role ambiguity that exceeds their capacity to manage work responsibilities. The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Theory, developed by Bakker and Demerouti, provides a comprehensive framework for understanding work stress in organizational contexts. According to this theory, job demands refer to aspects of work that require sustained physical or psychological effort, such as workload, time pressure, and emotional demands. In contrast, job resources include factors that help employees achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth, such as supervisor support, autonomy, and organizational support. When job demands exceed available resources, employees may experience work stress, leading to emotional exhaustion and reduced productivity. However, when adequate resources are provided, employees are better able to cope with job demands and maintain their performance. Work stress can originate from several sources, including excessive workload, role ambiguity, role conflict, poor working conditions, and interpersonal conflicts within the workplace. In higher education institutions, administrative staff often face multiple responsibilities, tight deadlines, and technological changes that may increase stress levels. From a psychological perspective, work stress may manifest in both positive and negative forms. Positive stress, often referred to as eustress, can stimulate motivation and encourage individuals to improve their performance. In contrast, negative stress, known as distress, may result in fatigue, anxiety, and reduced productivity. Therefore, the impact of work stress on employee performance may vary depending on its intensity and the individual's ability to manage stress effectively. Several empirical studies have examined the relationship between work stress and employee performance. Research conducted by Saputra et al. found that work stress negatively affects employee performance when employees experience excessive workload and role conflict. Similarly, Ardiansyah and Budianto reported that work stress is one of the most dominant factors influencing employee performance in organizational environments. Nevertheless, other studies suggest that moderate levels of stress may enhance employee performance by encouraging employees to focus and work more efficiently. This indicates that the relationship between work stress and performance is complex and influenced by organizational support, leadership style, and individual coping mechanisms.

Employee Performance

Employee performance represents the level of achievement demonstrated by employees in completing tasks and responsibilities assigned by the organization. Performance is often used as a key indicator for evaluating organizational effectiveness and productivity. High employee performance contributes to improved organizational outcomes, service quality, and operational efficiency. The concept of employee performance is supported by several theoretical perspectives. One of the most widely used frameworks is the Individual Performance Theory proposed by Campbell, which states that employee performance is influenced by three main determinants: declarative knowledge, procedural skills, and motivation. Declarative knowledge refers to an individual's understanding of facts and information related to their job. Skills refer to the ability to perform tasks effectively, while motivation refers to the willingness to exert effort in achieving work objectives. Another relevant theoretical framework is the Goal Setting Theory developed by Locke and Latham. This theory suggests that specific and challenging goals lead to higher levels of

performance compared to vague or easy goals. Clear goals help direct employee attention, increase persistence, and encourage the development of effective work strategies. When employees understand organizational goals and perceive them as meaningful, they are more likely to perform their tasks efficiently. In addition, Expectancy Theory, proposed by Vroom, explains that employee performance is influenced by motivation derived from three components: expectancy, instrumentality, and valence. Expectancy refers to the belief that effort will lead to improved performance, instrumentality refers to the belief that performance will lead to certain outcomes, and valence refers to the value individuals place on those outcomes. When employees believe that their efforts will lead to meaningful rewards, their motivation and performance are likely to increase. In organizational practice, employee performance is commonly measured through several dimensions, including work quality, work quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, and independence in completing tasks. These dimensions provide a comprehensive evaluation of how well employees perform their roles within the organization. In higher education institutions, the performance of educational staff plays a vital role in supporting academic services and administrative operations. Efficient administrative services contribute to the overall effectiveness of university management and enhance institutional competitiveness.

Relationship Between Transformational Leadership, Work Stress, and Employee Performance

Previous research has demonstrated that leadership style and work stress are important determinants of employee performance. Transformational leadership can enhance employee motivation, commitment, and engagement, which ultimately improves performance outcomes. At the same time, excessive work stress may hinder employee productivity and reduce work quality. However, transformational leadership may also play a role in mitigating the negative effects of work stress. Leaders who provide support, encouragement, and guidance can help employees cope with work demands and maintain their performance even under stressful conditions. Empirical studies indicate that transformational leadership generally has a positive relationship with employee performance, whereas work stress often shows a negative relationship with performance. Nevertheless, the interaction between these variables may vary depending on organizational context and environmental factors. Therefore, examining the combined influence of transformational leadership and work stress on employee performance is important for understanding how leadership practices and workplace conditions shape organizational outcomes, particularly in higher education institutions.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research approach using a causal associative design to examine the relationships between transformational leadership, work stress, and employee performance. Quantitative research was chosen because it allows researchers to measure variables objectively and analyze relationships among variables using statistical techniques. The causal associative design aims to identify the extent to which independent variables influence dependent variables within a particular organizational context. In this study, transformational leadership and work stress were treated as independent variables, while employee performance was considered the dependent variable. The research was conducted at Universitas Negeri Manado, Indonesia,

focusing on educational staff who play an important role in supporting administrative and academic activities within the university.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all educational staff at Universitas Negeri Manado, totaling 235 employees. Since it was not feasible to involve the entire population in the study, a sampling technique was used to determine a representative sample. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a margin of error of 10 percent. Based on this calculation, a total of 70 respondents were selected as the research sample. The sampling technique applied in this study was simple random sampling, which ensures that each member of the population has an equal opportunity to be selected as a respondent. This method helps minimize sampling bias and increases the representativeness of the sample.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to the selected respondents. The questionnaire was designed to measure the perceptions of educational staff regarding transformational leadership, work stress, and employee performance. Each item in the questionnaire was measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). The transformational leadership variable was measured based on four main dimensions: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. The work stress variable was measured through indicators such as workload, role conflict, role ambiguity, and working conditions. Meanwhile, employee performance was measured through several indicators including work quality, work quantity, timeliness, effectiveness, and independence in completing tasks. Before the questionnaire was used for data collection, validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure that the research instrument was accurate and consistent in measuring the intended variables.

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical techniques with the assistance of Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. Descriptive statistics were used to describe the characteristics of respondents and the distribution of research variables. Inferential statistical analysis was conducted using multiple linear regression analysis to determine the influence of transformational leadership and work stress on employee performance. Prior to conducting regression analysis, several classical assumption tests were performed, including the normality test, multicollinearity test, and heteroscedasticity test, to ensure that the regression model met the statistical requirements. The regression analysis was used to test both partial and simultaneous effects of the independent variables on the dependent variable. The significance of the relationships among variables was evaluated using the t-test for partial effects and the F-test for simultaneous effects, with a significance level of 0.05. Through this analytical approach, the study aimed to provide empirical evidence regarding the influence of transformational leadership and work stress on the performance of educational staff at Universitas Negeri Manado.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The respondents involved in this study were educational staff members working at Universitas Negeri Manado. From the total population of 235 educational staff members, 70 respondents were selected using simple random sampling based on the Slovin formula. The characteristics of respondents were analyzed to provide an overview of the demographic background of the research participants. Based on gender distribution, the majority of respondents were female employees, representing approximately 57% of the total sample, while male employees accounted for around 43%. This indicates that administrative roles within the institution are slightly dominated by female staff members. In terms of age distribution, most respondents were within the productive working age group. Approximately 46% of respondents were between 31 and 40 years old, followed by 29% between 41 and 50 years old, 17% under 30 years old, and the remaining 8% above 50 years old. This suggests that the majority of educational staff members are in their mid-career stage, which generally corresponds with higher levels of professional experience and organizational familiarity. Regarding educational background, most respondents held a bachelor's degree, accounting for approximately 63% of the total respondents. Meanwhile, 25% of respondents held a master's degree, and the remaining 12% held a diploma qualification. This indicates that the educational staff at Universitas Negeri Manado possess relatively adequate academic qualifications to perform their administrative responsibilities. The distribution of respondents based on years of service showed that approximately 38% had worked for more than ten years, while 34% had worked between five and ten years, and the remaining 28% had less than five years of working experience. This indicates that a considerable proportion of employees have substantial organizational experience, which may contribute to the effectiveness of institutional operations. Understanding the demographic characteristics of respondents is important because these factors may indirectly influence employees' perceptions of leadership, stress levels, and work performance.

Descriptive Analysis of Research Variables

Descriptive analysis was conducted to examine the general perceptions of respondents regarding transformational leadership, work stress, and employee performance. The results were calculated based on the mean score of each variable measured using a five-point Likert scale. The descriptive analysis revealed that the overall perception of transformational leadership among respondents was categorized as relatively high. Respondents generally perceived that their leaders demonstrated behaviors associated with transformational leadership, such as providing inspiration, encouraging innovation, and offering personal support to employees. Among the four dimensions of transformational leadership, inspirational motivation showed the highest average score. This suggests that leaders at Universitas Negeri Manado are perceived to effectively communicate organizational goals and motivate employees to perform their tasks enthusiastically. The second highest dimension was individualized consideration, indicating that leaders tend to provide attention and support to individual employees. Intellectual stimulation also received a relatively positive response from respondents, although its score was slightly lower compared to other dimensions. This suggests that while leaders encourage employees to think creatively, there may still be opportunities to further strengthen innovative thinking within the organization. Regarding work stress, the descriptive analysis indicated that respondents experienced moderate levels of

work stress. Several respondents reported experiencing workload pressures, particularly during peak academic periods such as student registration, examination schedules, and administrative reporting deadlines. Role ambiguity and role conflict were also identified as contributing factors to work stress among educational staff. Some employees indicated that unclear job responsibilities or overlapping tasks sometimes lead to confusion and increased work pressure. Despite these stress factors, many respondents reported that they were still able to manage their responsibilities effectively. This suggests that the stress levels experienced by employees may not necessarily reach a level that significantly disrupts their work performance. For the employee performance variable, the descriptive analysis indicated that the overall performance level of educational staff at Universitas Negeri Manado was categorized as high. Most respondents reported that they were able to complete their tasks efficiently and within the required time frame. Among the performance indicators, work quality received the highest average score. This indicates that employees generally prioritize accuracy and professionalism in performing their duties. Timeliness also received a relatively high score, suggesting that employees are capable of meeting deadlines for administrative tasks. Work quantity and effectiveness also showed positive results, although some respondents indicated that high workload levels occasionally limit their ability to perform tasks optimally. Overall, the descriptive analysis suggests that educational staff at Universitas Negeri Manado demonstrate relatively strong performance despite experiencing moderate levels of work stress.

Validity and Reliability Testing

Before conducting the main data analysis, validity and reliability tests were performed to ensure that the research instruments used in this study were appropriate for measuring the intended variables. The validity test was conducted using the Pearson Product Moment correlation method. Each questionnaire item was tested by comparing the calculated correlation value (r -count) with the critical value of the correlation coefficient (r -table) at a significance level of 0.05. The results showed that all questionnaire items for the transformational leadership, work stress, and employee performance variables had correlation values higher than the critical value. Therefore, all items were considered valid and suitable for measuring the research variables. Reliability testing was conducted using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient to evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement instruments. The results indicated that all variables had Cronbach's Alpha values above the acceptable threshold of 0.70. Specifically, the transformational leadership variable showed a reliability coefficient exceeding 0.85, indicating high internal consistency. The work stress variable had a Cronbach's Alpha value above 0.80, while the employee performance variable also demonstrated a reliability coefficient above 0.80. These results confirm that the research instruments used in this study were both valid and reliable for collecting empirical data.

Normality Test

The normality test was conducted to determine whether the distribution of residual values followed a normal distribution. The test was performed using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test and supported by a normal probability plot. The results indicated that the significance value of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was greater than 0.05, suggesting that the residual data were normally distributed. In addition, the normal probability plot showed that the residual points were distributed closely around the diagonal line, further confirming the normality of the data distribution.

Multicollinearity Test

The multicollinearity test was conducted to examine whether there was a high correlation between independent variables. Multicollinearity can distort the estimation of regression coefficients and reduce the reliability of the model. The results of the multicollinearity test showed that the tolerance values for all independent variables were greater than 0.10, while the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were below the threshold of 10. These findings indicate that there was no multicollinearity problem between the transformational leadership and work stress variables.

Heteroscedasticity Test

The heteroscedasticity test was conducted using the scatterplot method to examine whether the variance of residuals was constant across different levels of predicted values. The scatterplot showed that the distribution of residual points was randomly scattered around the horizontal axis without forming a specific pattern. This indicates that the regression model did not suffer from heteroscedasticity. Based on the results of these classical assumption tests, it can be concluded that the regression model used in this study satisfies the necessary statistical assumptions and is suitable for further analysis.

Multiple Linear Regression Analysis

Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the influence of transformational leadership and work stress on employee performance. The regression model used in this study can be expressed in the following equation: Employee Performance = a + b1 (Transformational Leadership) + b2 (Work Stress) + e, where:

a = constant

b1 = regression coefficient for transformational leadership

b2 = regression coefficient for work stress

e = error term

The regression analysis results indicated that transformational leadership had a positive regression coefficient. This suggests that an increase in transformational leadership practices is associated with an increase in employee performance. Meanwhile, the work stress variable showed a negative regression coefficient, indicating that higher levels of work stress tend to reduce employee performance.

Hypothesis Testing

Partial Test (t-test)

The t-test was conducted to examine the individual influence of each independent variable on employee performance. The results showed that transformational leadership had a statistically significant effect on employee performance. The significance value was below the 0.05 threshold, indicating that the influence of transformational leadership on employee performance is statistically significant. This finding supports the hypothesis that transformational leadership positively influences employee performance. Leaders who demonstrate transformational behaviors are able to motivate employees, foster innovation, and create a supportive working environment that enhances productivity. For the work stress variable, the t-test results also showed a statistically significant effect on employee performance. The negative regression coefficient indicates that increased levels of work stress tend to reduce employee performance. This result suggests that excessive workload, role ambiguity, and organizational pressure may hinder employees' ability to

perform their tasks effectively.

Simultaneous Test (F-test)

The F-test was conducted to determine whether the independent variables jointly influence the dependent variable. The results showed that the F-statistic value was statistically significant at the 0.05 level. This indicates that transformational leadership and work stress simultaneously influence employee performance. In other words, both variables collectively contribute to explaining variations in employee performance within the organization

Coefficient of Determination

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was calculated to determine how much variation in employee performance can be explained by the independent variables included in the model. The results indicated that transformational leadership and work stress jointly explained a substantial proportion of the variance in employee performance. However, there were still other factors outside the model that may also influence employee performance, such as organizational culture, job satisfaction, work motivation, and employee competencies. This suggests that while transformational leadership and work stress are important determinants of employee performance, they are not the only factors affecting employee productivity.

Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study highlight the important role of leadership and workplace conditions in shaping employee performance within higher education institutions. Transformational leadership appears to play a significant role in enhancing employee motivation and engagement. Leaders who provide inspiration, encourage innovation, and support employees' professional development can create a work environment that fosters higher productivity. At the same time, work stress remains an important organizational challenge. While moderate levels of stress may encourage employees to improve their performance, excessive stress can negatively affect work outcomes. Therefore, organizations must implement effective leadership practices and stress management strategies to maintain optimal employee performance.

Discussion

This study aimed to examine the influence of transformational leadership and work stress on the performance of educational staff at Universitas Negeri Manado. The findings reveal that both variables significantly affect employee performance, either individually or simultaneously. The discussion below elaborates on these findings by linking them with relevant theories and previous empirical studies.

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Employee Performance

The results of this study indicate that transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee performance. This finding suggests that leaders who demonstrate transformational behaviors—such as inspiring employees, encouraging innovation, and providing individualized support—can effectively enhance employee productivity and work outcomes. This result is consistent with the theory of transformational leadership proposed by Bass and Riggio,

which emphasizes that transformational leaders motivate followers to exceed their expected performance by aligning individual goals with organizational objectives. Leaders who articulate a clear vision and provide emotional and professional support tend to foster higher levels of engagement and commitment among employees. Furthermore, this finding aligns with the perspective of Northouse, who argues that transformational leadership creates a strong emotional connection between leaders and followers, leading to increased motivation and performance. In the context of higher education institutions, where collaboration and service quality are essential, such leadership practices play a crucial role in improving administrative effectiveness. Empirically, the findings of this study are in line with previous research conducted by Judge and Piccolo, which demonstrated that transformational leadership has a strong positive correlation with employee performance. Similarly, studies in educational settings have shown that leaders who adopt transformational leadership styles are more likely to improve staff performance by creating a supportive and motivating work environment. In the case of Universitas Negeri Manado, the positive perception of transformational leadership suggests that leaders are able to effectively communicate organizational goals and provide direction to employees. This contributes to improved work quality, timeliness, and overall productivity among educational staff. Therefore, strengthening transformational leadership practices can be considered a strategic approach to enhancing employee performance in higher education institutions.

The Effect of Work Stress on Employee Performance

The results also show that work stress has a significant negative effect on employee performance. This finding indicates that higher levels of stress tend to reduce employees' ability to perform their tasks effectively. Factors such as excessive workload, role ambiguity, and time pressure contribute to increased stress levels, which in turn affect productivity and work quality. This result can be explained through the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) theory, which states that when job demands exceed the available resources, employees are more likely to experience stress and burnout. In such conditions, employees may struggle to maintain concentration, experience fatigue, and show decreased motivation, ultimately leading to lower performance. The findings of this study are consistent with previous research indicating that work stress negatively impacts employee performance. For instance, studies have shown that employees experiencing high levels of stress tend to exhibit lower productivity, reduced job satisfaction, and decreased organizational commitment. These outcomes highlight the importance of managing workplace stress to ensure optimal employee performance. However, it is important to note that the descriptive analysis in this study indicates that the level of stress experienced by employees is moderate. This suggests that while stress exists, it has not reached a level that completely disrupts performance. In some cases, moderate stress may even act as a motivating factor, encouraging employees to complete tasks more efficiently. This phenomenon is often referred to as eustress, which can positively influence performance when managed properly. In the context of Universitas Negeri Manado, the presence of work stress may be associated with administrative workload and organizational demands. Therefore, it is essential for the institution to implement effective stress management strategies,

such as workload distribution, clear job descriptions, and supportive supervision, to minimize the negative impact of stress on employee performance.

The Simultaneous Effect of Transformational Leadership and Work Stress

The results of the simultaneous analysis indicate that transformational leadership and work stress jointly influence employee performance. This finding suggests that employee performance is shaped by both positive organizational factors (leadership) and negative factors (stress). From a theoretical perspective, this finding supports the integration of leadership theory and the JD-R model. Transformational leadership can be considered a form of job resource that helps employees cope with job demands and reduce the negative impact of stress. Leaders who provide support, encouragement, and guidance can enhance employees' resilience and ability to manage work pressure. This interaction between leadership and stress highlights the importance of a balanced organizational environment. While transformational leadership can enhance motivation and performance, its effectiveness may be limited if employees experience excessive stress. Conversely, even in high-stress environments, strong leadership can help mitigate negative outcomes by providing emotional and professional support. Empirical studies have also emphasized the role of leadership in moderating the effects of work stress. Leaders who adopt transformational behaviors are more likely to create a positive work climate, reduce employee burnout, and improve overall performance. Therefore, organizations should not only focus on improving leadership practices but also on managing workplace stress to achieve optimal outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the sample size is relatively limited and focuses on a single institution, which may affect the generalizability of the findings. Second, the study only examines two independent variables, while other factors such as job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational culture may also influence employee performance. Future research is recommended to include additional variables and expand the research scope to multiple institutions. This would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing employee performance in higher education settings.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study contribute to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between transformational leadership, work stress, and employee performance in the context of higher education institutions. The study supports the applicability of transformational leadership theory and the JD-R model in explaining employee behavior and performance. From a practical perspective, the results highlight the importance of developing effective leadership practices within universities. Leaders should focus on inspiring employees, encouraging innovation, and providing individualized support to enhance performance. At the

same time, organizations should implement stress management strategies to reduce the negative impact of work stress.

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