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The Influence of Compensation and Transformational Leadership on Work Engagement Mediated Job Stress

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of compensation and transformational leadership on work engagement with job stress as a mediating variable among employees of PT Trans Eurokars Indonesia. A quantitative approach with a causal design was applied to 60 respondents selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire and analyzed using Partial Least Squares (PLS) through SmartPLS 4.0 software. The findings reveal that compensation has a significant negative effect on job stress and a significant positive effect on work engagement. Transformational leadership also has a significant negative effect on job stress and a significant positive effect on work engagement. However, job stress does not significantly affect work engagement. Furthermore, job stress mediates the relationship between compensation and work engagement but does not mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and work engagement. These results suggest that appropriate compensation and effective transformational leadership are crucial for enhancing employee engagement, while job stress plays a limited mediating role. This research contributes to understanding employee engagement drivers and provides managerial implications for improving human resource management practices in the automotive industry.

Keywords: Compensation; Transformational Leadership; Job Stress; Work Engagement; Employee Performance.

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INTRODUCTION

Employee engagement has become a crucial factor for organizational success in maintaining productivity and competitiveness. In recent years, many organizations have faced challenges in sustaining employee commitment and motivation, which are often affected by compensation systems, leadership style, and psychological well-being. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2013), work engagement refers to a positive and fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. A high level of work engagement can lead to improved performance, lower turnover intention, and greater organizational loyalty.

Compensation is one of the key determinants influencing employee engagement. Fair and adequate compensation enhances employee satisfaction and reduces job-related tension (Sedarmayanti, 2011). When employees perceive that they are rewarded appropriately for their contributions, their psychological attachment to the organization increases, resulting in higher engagement levels. On the other hand, insufficient compensation may lead to dissatisfaction, stress, and decreased commitment.

Transformational leadership also plays a significant role in shaping employee engagement. Leaders who inspire, motivate, and provide individualized consideration can foster stronger emotional connections among employees (Bass, 1998). Previous studies (Avolio & Yammarino, 2013) have shown that transformational leaders positively influence motivation, trust, and engagement by communicating a clear vision and empowering subordinates.

However, job stress often acts as a mediating factor that weakens the relationship between compensation, leadership, and engagement. Robbins (2011) defines job stress as a dynamic condition in which an individual faces constraints, demands, or opportunities that exceed personal resources. High levels of stress can diminish enthusiasm and concentration, thereby reducing engagement. Conversely, an optimal level of job stress may encourage productivity if managed effectively.

PT Trans Eurokars Indonesia, a company engaged in the automotive industry, provides an interesting context for this research. The organization faces intense competition and high work demands that may influence employee motivation and stress levels. Therefore, understanding how compensation and transformational leadership affect work engagement through job stress can provide valuable insights for improving human resource management strategies in the company.

Based on the discussion above, this study aims to analyze the effect of compensation and transformational leadership on work engagement mediated by job stress among employees of PT Trans Eurokars Indonesia. The results are expected to contribute to the development of organizational behavior theory and provide practical implications for improving employee well-being and engagement.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Management Theory

Management is a process of planning, organizing, directing, and controlling resources to achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently. According to Priyambodo (2021), the

four management functions planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling form the foundation for coordinating human and material resources. In modern organizations, management serves as both science and an art that integrates decision-making, coordination, and leadership to achieve performance excellence.

Human Resource Management Theory

Human Resource Management (HRM) refers to the process of acquiring, developing, motivating, and maintaining an effective workforce. Simamora (2019) defines HRM as the utilization and development of individuals through functions such as recruitment, training, performance appraisal, and compensation. Effective HRM ensures that employees' skills and motivation align with organizational objectives, thus enhancing productivity and engagement.

Compensation Theory

Compensation represents all forms of financial and non-financial rewards given to employees in return for their contributions. Sedarmayanti (2011) explains that compensation includes direct payments such as salaries and bonuses, and indirect benefits like health insurance and allowances. Fair and competitive compensation motivates employees, reduces turnover, and increases job satisfaction, which can lead to higher engagement and lower job stress.

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership emphasizes inspiring and motivating employees to achieve beyond expectations. Burns (1978) and Bass (1998) describe transformational leaders as individuals who create vision, foster intellectual stimulation, and provide individualized consideration. This leadership style enhances employee confidence, creativity, and emotional commitment to organizational goals. Transformational leaders also reduce stress by providing support and clarity in achieving collective success.

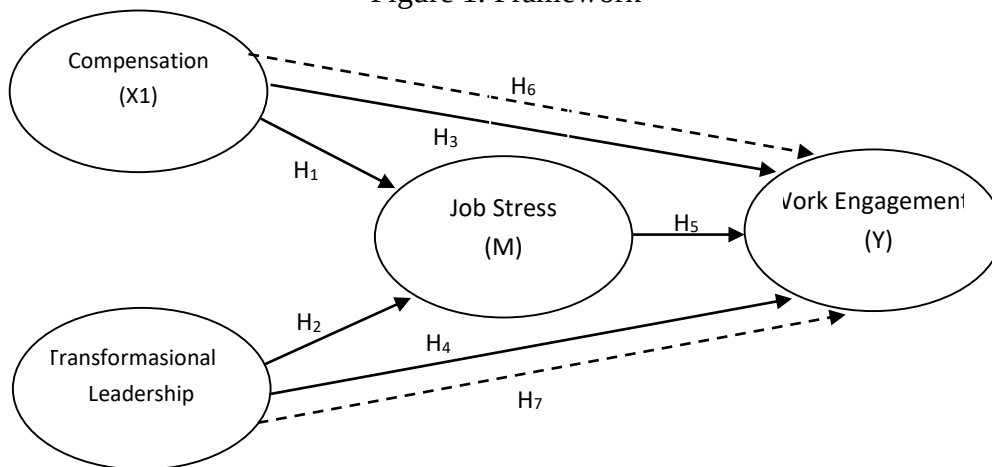
Job Stress Theory

Job stress refers to the emotional and physical strain resulting from work demands that exceed an employee's capacity or resources. Robbins (2011) defines job stress as a dynamic condition in which individuals face constraints or pressures related to achieving important outcomes. Prolonged job stress can reduce job satisfaction, engagement, and productivity, but moderate stress may also drive better performance when managed effectively.

Work Engagement Theory

Work engagement is a positive and fulfilling work-related state characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption (Bakker et al., 2013). Engaged employees are energetic, committed, and deeply involved in their tasks. According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2002), engagement leads to improved performance and organizational loyalty. Compensation and leadership styles are major antecedents that influence engagement either directly or through job stress.

Figure 1. Framework



Description:

1. Independent variables, whose value is not directly related to other values, variables are given the symbol (X), among others:
X1: Compensation
X2: Transformational Leadership
2. Mediating variable, which acts as an intermediary between the independent and dependent variables:
M: Job Stress
3. Dependent variable, the variable whose value depends on other variables, is given the symbol (Y):
Y: Work Engagement

METHOD

Time and Place of Research

This research process began with identifying problems that occurred within the company, formulating research objectives, and collecting theoretical foundations to strengthen the basis of each variable studied. The next stages included designing data collection methods, preparing research instruments, distributing questionnaires to respondents, processing the collected data, and compiling the final report. The research was conducted from April to June 2024 at PT Trans Eurokars Indonesia, located in Kebon Jeruk, West Jakarta, which operates in the premium automotive distribution sector.

Research Design

This study used a quantitative causal research design. According to Sugiyono (2018), quantitative research is based on positivism philosophy, used to study a specific population or sample, and aims to test hypotheses using numerical data and statistical techniques. The causal design was chosen because it allows the researcher to identify cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Hardani, 2020). In this study, compensation and transformational leadership act as independent variables, job stress as a mediating variable, and work engagement as the dependent variable.

Measurement Scale

Sugiyono (2019) explains that the Likert scale is used to measure attitudes and opinions, and perceptions of a group or individual towards a certain social phenomenon. In research, researchers determine specific social phenomena that will be used as research variables.

Population and Sample

The population in this study consisted of 60 employees of PT Trans Eurokars Indonesia from three divisions. According to Sugiyono (2017), population refers to the total number of subjects that possess specific characteristics defined by the researcher. The sampling technique used was purposive sampling, which selects respondents based on certain criteria relevant to the research objectives. The criteria included employees who had worked long enough to understand the company's operational system and leadership style. Because the total population was relatively small, all 60 employees were included as research respondents (census sampling).

Data Analysis Method

The data collected were analyzed descriptively to explain the relationship between compensation, transformational leadership, job stress, and work engagement. The analysis began with data grouping, checking completeness, and tabulating responses based on the questionnaire results. According to Hardani (2020), descriptive analysis helps summarize data to provide a clear overview of research findings. The results were then interpreted by comparing empirical findings with theoretical references to identify the influence of each variable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data Quality Test Results

1. Outer Model

a. Convergent Validity

The convergent validity test was conducted to determine whether each indicator correlated strongly with its latent variable. According to Hair et al. (2021), an indicator is considered valid if the loading factor value exceeds 0.70 and the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) value is greater than 0.50.

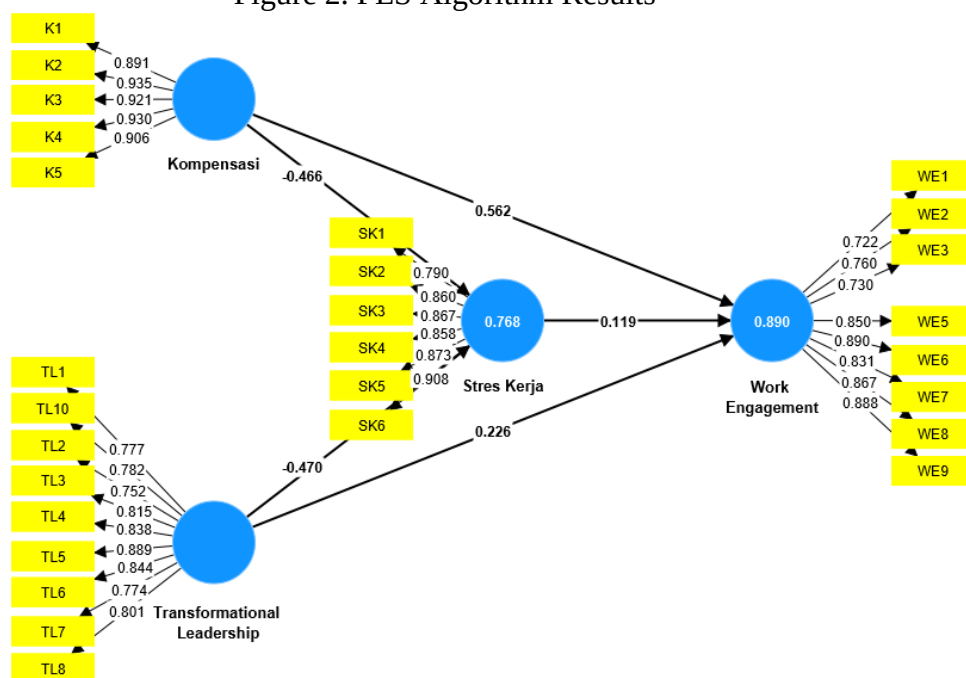
Table 1. Convergent Validity Test Results

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	Information
Compensation	K1	0,891	valid
	K2	0,935	valid
	K3	0,921	valid
	K4	0,930	valid
	K5	0,906	valid
Job Stress	SK1	0,789	valid
	SK2	0,860	Valid
	SK3	0,867	valid
	SK4	0,858	valid
	SK5	0,873	valid
	SK6	0,908	valid
	TL1	0,766	valid
	TL2	0,753	valid
	TL3	0,788	valid

Variable	Indicator	Outer Loading	Information
Transformasional Leadership	TL4	0,825	valid
	TL5	0,876	valid
	TL6	0,830	valid
	TL7	0,773	valid
	TL8	0,829	valid
	TL10	0,793	valid
	WE1	0,747	valid
	WE2	0,766	valid
	WE3	0,756	valid
Work Engagement	WE5	0,844	valid
	WE6	0,883	valid
	WE7	0,807	valid
	WE8	0,851	valid
	WE9	0,875	valid

Source: Output PLS (2025)

Figure 2. PLS Algorithm Results



Source: Output PLS (2025)

The results of the convergent validity modification test in the Figure and Table show that all indicators have met convergent validity because they have a factor loading value above 0.70.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity was used to determine whether the indicators of a construct are truly distinct from those of other constructs. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), the square root of the AVE for each construct should be higher than the correlation between constructs.

Tabel 2. Discriminant Validity Test Results

	Compensation	Job Stress	Transformational Leadership	Work Engagement
K1	0,891	0,685	0,655	0,819
K2	0,935	0,794	0,705	0,861
K3	0,921	0,737	0,681	0,843
K4	0,930	0,783	0,715	0,863
K5	0,906	0,758	0,707	0,794
SK1	0,721	0,790	0,605	0,762
SK2	0,689	0,860	0,725	0,713
SK3	0,681	0,867	0,830	0,748
SK4	0,632	0,858	0,643	0,730
SK5	0,675	0,873	0,648	0,731
SK6	0,726	0,908	0,775	0,776
TL1	0,706	0,761	0,777	0,748
TL2	0,621	0,746	0,752	0,680
TL3	0,544	0,555	0,815	0,654
TL4	0,550	0,594	0,838	0,671
TL5	0,656	0,633	0,889	0,731
TL6	0,501	0,580	0,844	0,567
TL7	0,536	0,531	0,774	0,542
TL8	0,697	0,680	0,801	0,732
TL10	0,613	0,680	0,782	0,645
WE1	0,531	0,624	0,679	0,722
WE2	0,738	0,667	0,627	0,760
WE3	0,553	0,634	0,672	0,730
WE5	0,758	0,677	0,691	0,850
WE6	0,710	0,732	0,726	0,890
WE7	0,805	0,753	0,666	0,831
WE8	0,778	0,768	0,687	0,867
WE9	0,815	0,797	0,715	0,888

Source: Output PLS (2025)

Table 2 shows that the value of each variable produces a large cross loading value in making comparisons between variables in the statements used to represent them

Table 3. AVE Test Results

Variable	AVE
Compensation	0,840
Job Stress	0,740
Transformational Leadership	0,655
Work Engagement	0,672

Source: Output PLS (2025)

Based on Table 5, it shows that the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) test for each variable has a value of more than 0.5. Therefore, the value of all constructs has met the criteria for good discriminant validity.

2. Inner Model

a. R-Square (R²)

Table 4. Endogenous Variable R² Square

Endogenous Variable	R-square
Stres Kerja	0,768
Work Engagement	0,890

Source: Output PLS (2025)

The R-Square value measures how much the independent variables explain the dependent variables. Based on Table 4, the R^2 value for Job Stress is 0.768 (moderate) and for Work Engagement is 0.890 (strong). This means that Compensation and Transformational Leadership explain approximately 76.8% of the variance in Work Engagement through Job Stress.

b. Q-Square (Q^2)

Goodness of Fit testing of the structural model in the inner model uses the predictive-relevance value (Q^2). A Q-square value greater than 0 (zero) indicates that the model has predictive relevance. The R-square value for each endogenous variable in this study can be seen in the following calculation:

The predictive relevance value is obtained using the following formula:

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - R_1)(1 - R_p) \quad (1)$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - (1 - 0,768)(1 - 0,890)$$

$$Q^2 = 1 - (0,232)(0,110)$$

$$Q^2 = 0,9744$$

The above calculation shows a predictive relevance value of 0.9744, which is greater than 0 (zero). This means that 97.44% of Work Stress and Work Engagement (dependent variables) are explained by the independent variables used. Thus, the model is considered to have a relevant predictive value.

c. Hypothesis Testing Results

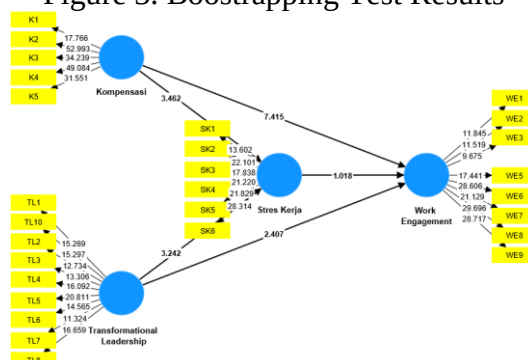
The hypothesis testing results were obtained through the bootstrapping procedure using SmartPLS 4. The significance of each relationship was determined based on the t-statistic (>1.96) and p-value (<0.05). The results are presented in Table 6.

Tabel 5. Hypothesis Testing Results

	Original Sample	Standard Deviation	T- Statistics	P Values	Information
Compensation → Job Stress	-0,466	0,134	3,462	0,000	Negative Significant -
Compensation → Work Engagement	0,562	0,076	7,415	0,000	Postive Significant -
Transformational Leadership → Job Stress	-0,470	0,145	3,242	0,001	Negative Significant -
Transformational Leadership → Work Engagement	0,226	0,094	2,407	0,008	Postive Significant -
Job Stress → Work Engagement	0,119	0,117	1,018	0,085	Not Significant
Mediation					
Compensation → Job Stress → Work Engagement	0,102	0,052	1,967	0,035	Partial Mediation
Transformational Leadership → Job Stress → Work Engagement	0,103	0,069	1,490	0,068	Unmediated

Source: Output PLS (2025)

Figure 3. Bootstrapping Test Results



Source: Output PLS (2025)

Discussion

The Effect of Compensation on Job Stress

Based on the hypothesis test, the t-statistic value was 3.462 and the p-value was 0.000, indicating a significant negative relationship between compensation and job stress. This means that higher compensation tends to reduce employee stress levels. Adequate pay, health benefits, and fair rewards make employees feel secure and reduce psychological strain. This finding supports Herawan et al. (2019) and Saxena & Rai (2016), who found that proper compensation reduces job stress.

The Effect of Compensation on Work Engagement

The results show a t-statistic of 7.415 and a p-value of 0.000, meaning compensation positively and significantly affects work engagement. Employees who receive fair and appropriate compensation are more motivated and committed to their work. This is consistent with the findings of Sari & Kurniawan (2022) and Hairudinor (2021), who confirmed that fair compensation enhances employee engagement.

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Job Stress

The t-statistic value of 3.242 and p-value of 0.001 indicate that transformational leadership has a significant negative effect on job stress. Leaders who inspire, motivate, and appreciate employees can reduce their work-related tension. This finding aligns with Sartika & Sari (2020) and Pribadi (2014), who found that transformational leaders help lower employee stress levels.

The Effect of Transformational Leadership on Work Engagement

A t-statistic of 2.407 and a p-value of 0.008 show that transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on work engagement. When leaders communicate a clear vision and demonstrate optimism, employees feel proud and motivated to perform better. This finding supports Arifin & Jannah (2023) and Kairupan (2017).

The Effect of Job Stress on Work Engagement

The test results show a t-statistic of 1.018 and a p-value of 0.085, indicating that job stress does not significantly affect work engagement. Even when employees experience stress, they still value their work and remain committed to company goals. This result contradicts Kusumawardani (2021), who found that job stress negatively affects work engagement.

The Mediating Effect of Job Stress between Compensation and Work Engagement

The t-statistic value of 1.967 and a p-value of 0.035 indicate that job stress partially mediates the relationship between compensation and work engagement. This means that while compensation directly increases engagement, it also indirectly influences engagement by reducing stress. This finding is in line with Darmawan (2023), who found that job stress mediates the effect of compensation on employee engagement.

The Mediating Effect of Job Stress between Transformational Leadership and Work Engagement

The test results show a t-statistic of 1.490 and a p-value of 0.068, indicating that job stress does not mediate the effect of transformational leadership on work engagement. Leadership directly influences engagement without passing through job stress. This finding supports Narosaputra (2022), who found that transformational leadership affects work engagement directly.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research results, several conclusions can be drawn:

1. Compensation has a significant negative effect on job stress. Higher compensation reduces employee stress.
2. Compensation has a significant positive effect on work engagement. Fair rewards increase employee involvement.
3. Transformational leadership has a significant negative effect on job stress. Supportive leaders help reduce pressure.
4. Transformational leadership has a significant positive effect on work engagement. Inspiring leaders improve motivation and commitment.
5. Job stress has no significant effect on work engagement.
6. Job stress partially mediates the relationship between compensation and work engagement.
7. Job stress does not mediate the effect of transformational leadership on work engagement.

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