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Exploring Employee Status Change as a Career Shock: Leadership and Motivation Affect on Employee Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: This study aims to examine the impact of transformational leadership and public service motivation on employee engagement among KPK employees following the disruptive event of transitioning employment status to civil state apparatus.

Methodology: A quantitative causal associative study with a sample of 301 people from 1.157 KPK employees affected by the employment status change and who were still working at KPK at the time of the research. Data was obtained from Google Form questionnaire distributed via e-mail to respondents. Quantitative analysis used Partial Least Square and causal relationships were explored using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through the SmartPLS version 4 application.

Finding: The transition of employment status as a positive valenced career shock most strongly influences employee engagement. Transformational leadership does not significantly affect employee engagement. However, its influence on employee engagement becomes more effective and significant when moderated by career shock. Meanwhile, the significant influence of public service motivation on employee engagement is not affected by the moderation of career shock.

Conclusion: This study demonstrates that transformational leadership does not always significantly influence employee engagement, particularly in public institutions, but intervention from other variables is required to enhance its effectiveness.

Keywords: Transformational Leadership; Public Service Motivation; Career Shock; Employee Engagement.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2019, there was a regulatory change governing KPK. The regulatory change mandated the transition of KPK employees' status to civil state apparatus. According to an internal survey conducted by Indonesian Corruption Watch (ICW) in 2020, nearly 70% of KPK employees expressed concerns regarding the institution's independence following the law revision (ICW, 2020). The turnover rate of KPK employees increased nearly twofold

during the employment status transition period from 3.62% in 2019 to 6.06 in 2021. The increase in the number of resigning employees indicates decreased/low employee engagement among KPK staff following the status transition. Employee engagement level has a negative effect on turnover potential (Reissova & Papay, 2021), meaning that the more engaged an employee is, the more capable they are of sustaining energy and readiness to work optimally, focusing and thinking sharply to complete tasks, and high emotional sensitivity when performing assigned role tasks, thereby reducing the employee's potential to leave their job. The result of a pre-survey of 23 KPK employees across all Echelon 1 working units showed that the majority of respondents (78.3%) felt no more enthusiastic about working now compared to before the regulatory change. Furthermore, the majority of respondents (78.3%) stated that they currently do not have greater pride in being KPK employees. The majority of employees also stated that the regulatory change did not positively affect work effectiveness (73.9%), often felt detached from their work and did not experience difficulty disconnecting (56.5%)

The transition of employment status to civil state apparatus constitutes a form of career shock, namely an unexpected disruptive event occurring beyond the individual employee's control and causing a reevaluation of one's career path (Akkermans, Collings, da Motta Veiga, Post, & Seibert, 2021). The pre-survey results showed that 82.6% of 23 respondents stated that civil state apparatus status does not provide better career guarantees.

KPK employees are required to have public service motivation, namely motivation that is oriented toward public interest and focuses on altruistic values, that is, values that encourage individuals to act for the good of others (Vandenabeele, Ritz, & Neumann, 2017). The career consequence of being a civil state apparatus is that employees must occupy certain functional positions that align with their educational background and work experience. If they do not meet the functional position requirement, then the employee's career stagnates, which impacts the depletion of employees' psychological resources and a decrease in public service motivation (Guan, Li, & Yu, 2025).

Studies examining the effect of career shock as a moderator on how transformational leadership and public service motivation affect employee engagement remain scarce, particularly in public institutions in Indonesia. Therefore, the objectives of this study are: 1) to identify and analyze the influence of transformational leadership, career shock, and public service motivation on employee engagement of KPK employees; 2) to identify and analyze the moderating role of career shock in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement of KPK employees; and 3) to identify and analyze the role of career shock as a moderator in the relationship of public service motivation and employee engagement of KPK employees.

Guided by these objectives, this research aims to address the following questions: 1) Does transformational leadership affect employee engagement among KPK employees?; 2) Does career shock affect employee engagement among KPK employees?; 3) Does public service motivation affect employee engagement among KPK employees?; 4) Does career shock moderate the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement among KPK employees?; and 5) Does career shock moderate the relationship between public service motivation and employee engagement among KPK employees?

Through these questions, this research is expected to offer practical implications for more effective employee engagement management for KPK employees affected by the

employment status transition to civil state apparatus and contribute to the sustainability of anti-corruption programs implemented by KPK for Indonesia.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

Literature Review

The anti-corruption issue is one of the global commitments outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, ensure access to justice for all, and establish effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels for sustainable development (United Nation, 2015). In Indonesia itself, corruption is considered as a very serious problem, constitutes an extraordinary crime and undermines the foundations of national and state life (RI, 2001). Therefore, in 2002, KPK was established as an independent state institution to eradicate corruption with human resources that are recruited and managed independently, different from human resources management in other state institutions or government agencies in Indonesia. Employee engagement at KPK is crucial in terms of maintaining anti-corruption programs sustainability carried out by KPK. Employee engagement affects employee performance (Byrne, 2022) which ultimately affects organizational performance, while transformational leadership as well as public service motivation and career shock are several variables that affect employee engagement.

Transformational Leadership

It focuses on developing followers, providing their needs, as well as empowering and aligning the goals of followers, leaders, groups, and the broader organization (Northouse, 2020). In the public institution, transformational leaders can drive employee engagement and readiness in implementing systemic changes in complex organizational structures (Bao, Zhang, & Yang, 2024).

Public Service Motivation

Defined as the motivation that a person has to give contribution to society (Vandenabeele et al., 2017). Public service motivation encompasses belief, value, and attitude that prioritize the greater good over personal, organizational interest as well as drives individuals to act accordingly whenever needed. In this perspective, when public sector employees obtain psychological benefits in work (i.e. feelings of meaningfulness and altruistic satisfaction), they tend to reciprocate with higher commitment and performance (Ripoll & Breaugh, 2025).

Career Shock

Defined as a shocking disruptive event that causes individuals to reconsider their career choices. It can have positive or negative valence depending on how individuals perceive and respond to the event. Factors that influence career shock originate from the individual themselves, organizational factors and environmental factors (Akkermans et al., 2021).

Career shock can cause changes in person-job or person-organisation fit, which in turn affects employees' motivation, ability, and opportunities to remain engaged in their work. When career shock reduces person-job fit or person-organisation fit, engagement tends to decrease. Conversely, if it increases through supportive interventions, engagement can be maintained or even enhanced (Simosi & Conway, 2024).

Employee Engagement

Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (SET), Alan M. Saks developed employee engagement theory which suggests engagement conditions can be viewed as resources for economic and

socio-emotional exchange. Employee engagement is a mix of individual and work-related aspects (job engagement) and aspects associated to the role context as part of organization (organizational engagement). Employees usually get engaged as a response to the resources provided by their organization, but when these resources are lacking, they often disengage and withdraw from their roles (Byrne, 2022).

Hypothesis Development

Transformational leaders transform crises into challenging situations by manifesting individual consideration of their followers in stressful situations through the use of intellectual stimulation to develop their followers' thinking creatively and seek adaptive solutions (Aulia & Ariyanto, 2025). This aligns with existing researches demonstrating a consistently positive relationship of transformational leadership and employee engagement (Alamri, 2023), (Farzana & Charoensukmongkol, 2024), (Song et al., 2022). Leaders in public institutions, especially in law enforcement agency like KPK, are expected to be able to overcome crises by embracing employees through effective communication and empathy so that creative and innovative ideas can be generated to overcome the crisis, and most importantly, the sense of ownership of the employees toward the ideas and innovations so that employees are more engaged in implementing decisions. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement.

Negatively valenced career shock can motivate employees' proactive behavior to build networks which ultimately can enhance perceived employability and career sustainability, especially if career opportunities exist (Zhou, Jiang, Khapova, & Qu, 2023). Valence is not inherent in the disruptive event that causes career shock, but is determined by individual characteristics, context, and everything that is valuable to the individual (Kerti et al., 2024). The individual's ability to adapt to change and face unexpected situations in their career and the tendency to more often feel and express positive emotions such as enthusiasm, excitement, and optimism can change negative valence and encourage individuals to not only survive in their work but also develop their career well, feel energetic and continue to learn (Mansur & Felix, 2021). The status as a state civil apparatus opens up career opportunities in other public institutions outside KPK, with clear and standardized career paths. This should be a better career guarantee for KPK employees who experienced employment status change. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H2: Career shock has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement.

Individuals with strong motivation to serve the public tend to be more excited working in the public institution, have stronger commitment and dedication to the organization and their work, and more deeply appreciate their duties and responsibilities (Borst, Blom, & Vandenabeele, 2025). This is in line with previous studies (Scrimshire, Edwards, Crosby, & Anderson, 2023) (Ding & Wang, 2023) (Lu & Chen, 2022). The task of eradicating corruption carried out by KPK employees aims to save state assets that should be used to fund development, public services, and the welfare of citizens. The dimensions and indicators of this motivation should be possessed by KPK employees. Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H3: Public service motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement

Research in public organizations examining the moderating role of career shock in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement is still very limited. Negatively valenced career shock can motivate employees to build networks which ultimately can enhance perceived employability and not result in negative impacts on careers (Zhou et al., 2023).

Transformational leaders encourage and energize followers, presenting a captivating and lucid vision of what's to come. They use effective communication to convey goals and high expectations (Ausat, Suherlan, Peirisal, & Hirawan, 2022). Effective communication is closely related to leadership as a supporter of engagement, especially in the disruptive event that demand the vital role of leaders in creating a safe environment, communicating the sense of crisis and strategic policies taken to employees in order to save the organization, and creating employee engagement for organizational sustainability (Santoso, Sulistyningtyas, & Pratama, 2022). Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H4: Career shock moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement.

Research that directly examines the moderating effect of career shock on how public service motivation affects employee engagement is still very limited. Job resources can overcome the adverse effect of career shock and strengthen the impact of career shock on engagement (Ugwu, Ugwu, Okpata, & Onyishi, 2024). The opportunity for better career growth from disruptive events can moderate the negative effects of career shock, such as turnover intention, by shaping how job satisfaction mediates the effect of public service motivation (Wang et al., 2022). The fact that public service motivation encourages engagement, career shock as moderator is also influenced by the availability of supporting job resources (i.e. better career opportunities, organizational support, leadership and opportunities to adapt). Therefore, the proposed hypothesis is:

H5: Career shock moderates the relationship between public service motivation and employee engagement.

Theoretical Framework and Conceptual Model

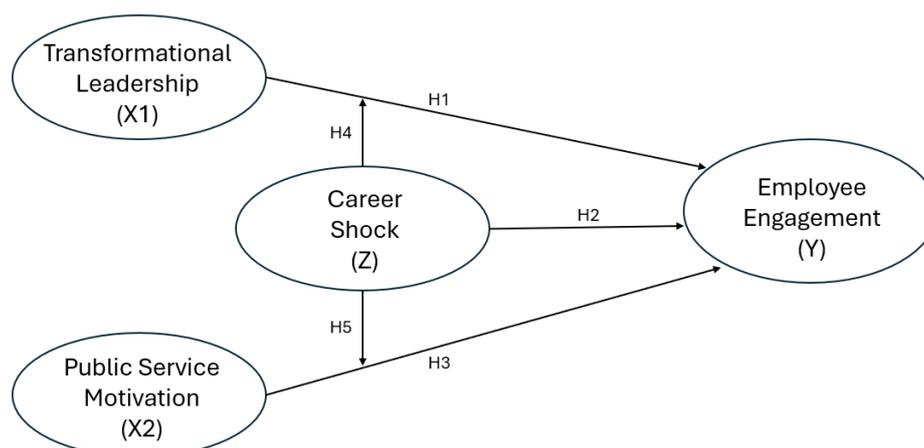
This study is based on Social Exchange Theory (SET) to understand individual behavior in the workplace, where this theory defines social exchange as (i) initiation of action from the actor to the target, (ii) attitudinal or behavioral response from the target as a return, and (iii) the resulting relationship (Ahmad, Nawaz, Ishaq, Khan, & Ashraf, 2023). Transformational leadership affects employee engagement through creating a high-quality social exchange environment by providing support, development, and employee empowerment which ultimately encourages employees to give reciprocal responses in the form of commitment, creativity, and better performance.

Public service motivation is not only individual motivation, but a representation of the values that employees bring into social exchange. On the other hand, a public organization such as KPK offers a mission and values that are aligned with public service motivation, so exchange occurs when there is a match between employee values and organizational values (Wightman & Christensen, 2024). Employees with high public service motivation feel a moral obligation to reciprocate organizational support in a meaningful way. Employees do not only consider what they receive from organization, but also how their contributions can serve the wider community (Esaki, Liu, & Vito, 2023).

The theory of Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) offers a structured approach to understanding disruptive events that can disrupt employees' career paths through the basic principle of this theory that the organizational environment affects employee well-being and performance. Career shock and disruption to employees' career patterns constitute job demands that create psychological pressure and uncertainty for employees, thus requiring sustained efforts to suppress psychological costs (Akkermans et al., 2021). Consequently, career shock can become job resources if it is positively valenced or negatively valenced that becomes positive because sustained efforts to suppress psychological costs are effectively implemented by management. Leadership as job resources, can help employees overcome the impact of disruptive events, reduce job demands, and stimulate personal growth (Yu & Xiang, 2025). Public service motivation as job resources helps employees overcome high job demands, reduce fatigue and cynicism, as well as maintain engagement and performance even when other resources are lacking and when facing challenging circumstances such as career shock or uncertainty (Jensen & Holten, 2023).

Conceptual model for this study illustrates as follows:

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework



METHOD

Research was conducted using a causal associative quantitative approach. The population of the research is KPK employees who had the status of Permanent Employees before the employment status changed to civil state apparatus in 2019, which at the time this research was conducted numbered 1,157 people. Purposive sampling technique used with a minimum sample size based on Slovin technique calculation and 5% margin of error of 298 respondents.

Data collection used Google Forms questionnaires that were distributed to all respondents via e-mail. The questionnaire contains question items from each variable studied and questionnaire completion on 5-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Quantitative analysis in this research uses Partial Least Square (PLS) to solve structural equations with many constructs, indicator variables, and structural relationships. The software used for data analysis is SmartPLS version 4.1.06. In addition, the Structural Equation

Modeling (SEM) method is used to explore the causality relationships between variables more deeply.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive Statistical Analysis

Of the 301 respondents, the majority were male (65.8%) with ages of 50.8% in the range of 36-45 years, 42% in the range of 25-35 years, and 3.6% aged over 56 years. A majority of respondents (69.8%) had over a decade of work experience at KPK and the other 30.8% had been working for 7–9 years with education level of 48.8% being bachelor’s degree, 37.8% being master’s degree, 5.7% being diploma’s degree and 7.7% being high school graduates.

Measurement Model

The outer model was conducted to assess validity and reliability of all indicators measuring research variables. Convergent validity testing used the loading factor value of each indicator with a minimum threshold of 0.7. Composite reliability and Cronbach’s Alpha value higher than 0.70 demonstrate the reliability of each variable. The average variance extracted (AVE) shows discriminant validity of each variable, in which a value higher than 0.5 demonstrates the validity of each variable.

Table 1. Loading Factor

Transformational Leadership		Public Service Motivation		Employee Engagement		Career Shock	
Item	Loading Factor	Item	Loading Factor	Item	Loading Factor	Item	Loading Factor
TL1	0.898	PSM1	0.951	EE1	0.944	CS1	0.840
TL2	0.878	PSM2	0.956	EE2	0.933	CS2	0.930
TL3	0.917	PSM3	0.887	EE3	0.942	CS3	0.902
TL4	0.844	PSM4	0.931	EE4	0.932	CS4	0.894
TL5	0.891	PSM5	0.947	EE5	0.935	CS5	0.842
TL6	0.877	PSM6	0.946	EE6	0.922	CS6	0.922
TL7	0.904	PSM7	0.870	EE7	0.931	CS7	0.896
TL8	0.837	PSM8	0.925	EE8	0.926	CS8	0.894
TL9	0.886	PSM9	0.950	EE9	0.943	CS9	0.834
TL10	0.874	PSM10	0.952	EE10	0.925	CS10	0.924
TL11	0.897	PSM11	0.869	EE11	0.920	CS11	0.890
TL12	0.845	PSM12	0.921				
TL13	0.887	PSM13	0.941				
TL14	0.867	PSM14	0.953				
TL15	0.915	PSM15	0.871				
TL16	0.836	PSM16	0.922				
TL17	0.892						
TL18	0.878						
TL19	0.914						
TL20	0.837						

Source: Data processing results from SmartPLS 4 (2025)

Table 2. AVE, Cronbach’s Alpha, & Composite reliability

Variable	AVE	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability
Transformational Leadership (X1)	0.773	0.985	0.988
Public Service Motivation (X2)	0.856	0.989	0.999
Employee Engagement (Y)	0.869	0.985	0.988
Career Shock (Z)	0.790	0.981	0.985

Source: Data processing results from SmartPLS 4 (2025)

Structural Model

Table 3 shows that all hypotheses have positive paths with a range of 0.043 – 0.420. The t-statistic and P-values of H2, H3 and H4 show significant relationships. However, H1 and H5 show insignificant relationships as indicated by t-statistic values below the threshold of 1.96, which are 1.672 and 0.614 respectively, and P-value exceeding the threshold of 0.05, which are 0.095 and 0.539. Career shock is the variable that most strongly influences employee engagement, it demonstrates the highest t-statistic value (7.903) and the smallest P-value (0.000).

Figure 2. Structural Model

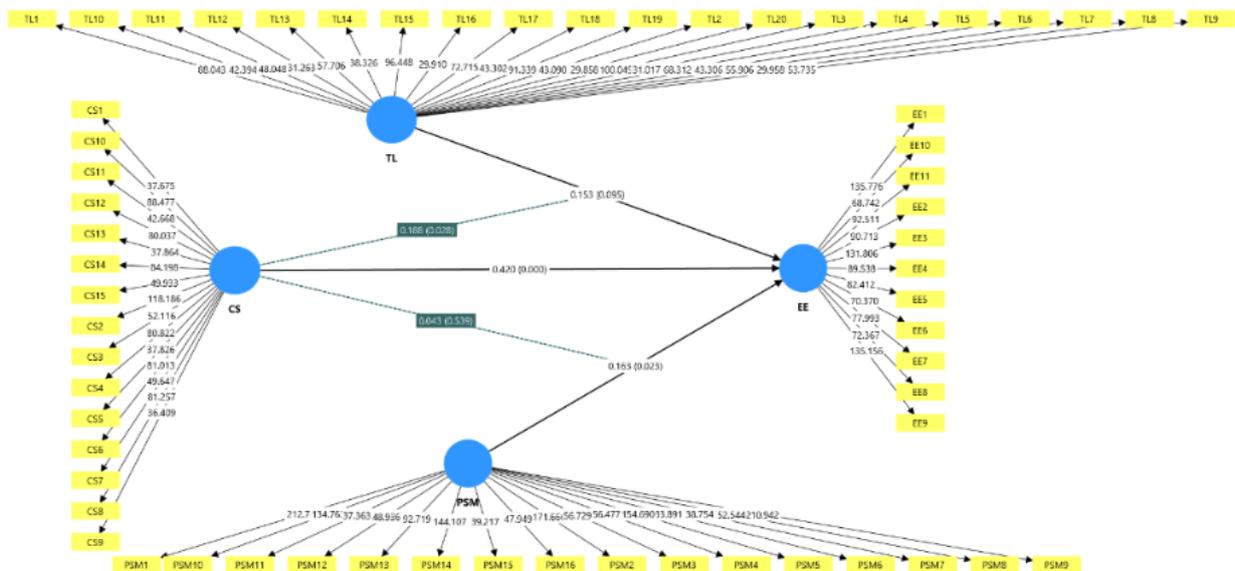
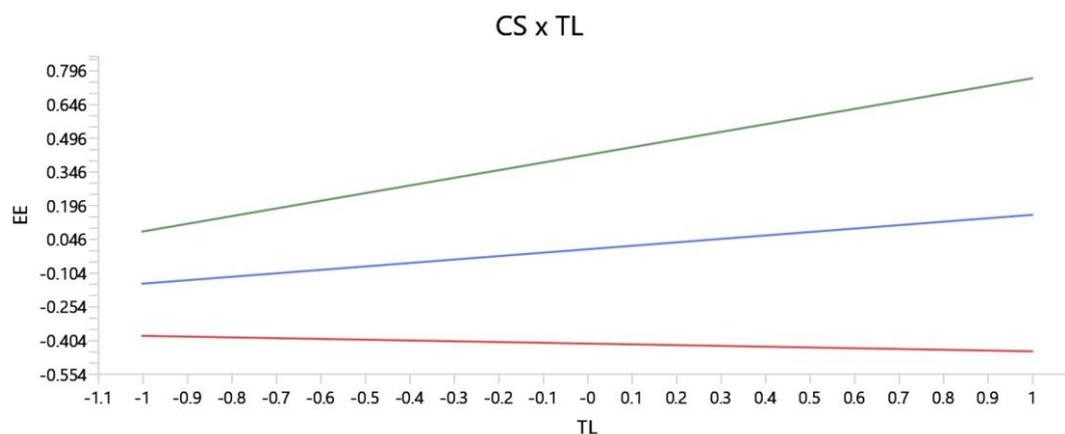


Table 3. Direct Effect and Moderation Effect Test Result

Variable	Original Sample O	Sample Mean M	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistic (O/STDEV)	P Values	Information
TL → EE (H1)	0.153	0.154	0.092	1.672	0.095	insignificant effect
PSM → EE (H2)	0.163	0.168	0.072	2.270	0.023	Positive significant effect
CS → EE (H3)	0.420	0.419	0.053	7.903	0.000	Positive significant effect
CSxTL → EE (H4)	0.188	0.192	0.085	2.199	0.028	Significant moderating effect
CSxPSM → EE (H5)	0.043	0.039	0.070	0.614	0.539	Insignificant moderating effect

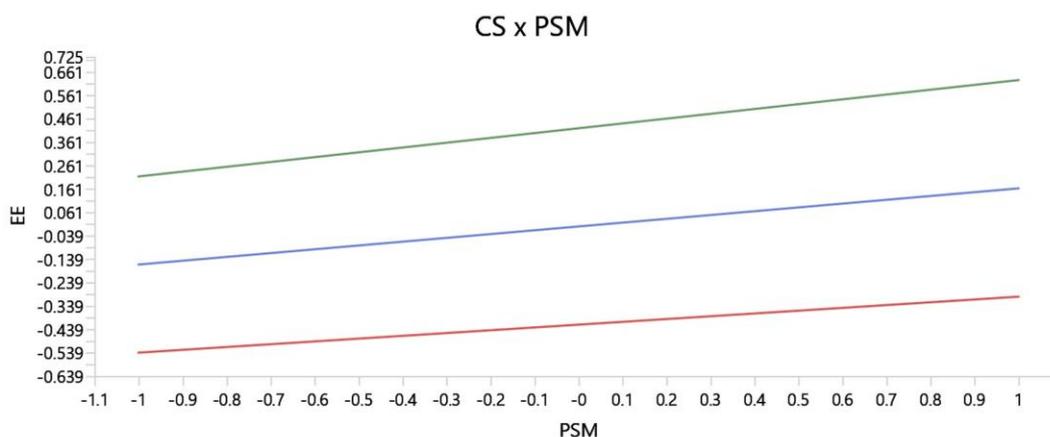
Source: Data processing results from SmartPLS 4 (2025)

Figure 3. Moderating Effect of Career Shock on on How Transformational Leadership Affects Employee Engagement



Caption: — CS on -1 SD, — CS on Mean, — CS on +1 SD

Figure 4. Moderating Effect of Career Shock on How Public Service Motivation Affects Employee Engagement



Caption: — CS on -1 SD, — CS on Mean, — CS on +1 SD

Discussion

The results show that transformational leadership insignificantly affects employee engagement. Contrasting with previous research results that consistently show a positive and significant influence where leaders turn crises into challenges by manifesting individual consideration of their followers in pressured situations through the use of intellectual stimuli to develop their followers' creative thinking and seek adaptive solutions (Aulia & Arijanto, 2025). However, the result is in line with previous research conducted by Nurtjahjani, et al. (2022) demonstrating the same result that transformational leadership insignificantly impacts engagement. The common thread is that the majority of respondents are employees who have worked in the organization for more than a decade and have internalized their responsibility to complete tasks, thus having psychological ownership of their work. In addition, the respondents are state civil apparatus who are considered to have job security, so the intention to resign is very low despite high workload and burnout. Most of the respondents of this research have been working in KPK for more than a decade (69.8%) and leadership is not considered as the main factor in employee engagement. Employees will be more involved in their work or tasks if the work or tasks have a real impact or support real efforts to eradicate corruption. For example, employees in the enforcement unit will have a high spirit in uncovering and handling corruption cases as well as recovering assets from perpetrators. Intervention from unit leaders is limited because the technical implementation of case disclosure and handling of corruption criminal cases is regulated in the procedure law. Employees in the education and community participation unit will have high spirits when assigned to design and implement anti-corruption education curricula at every level of education. Employees in the prevention unit will have high spirit when their socialization results in civil servants willing to report gratuities or the results of system system improvement studies providing recommendations that are implemented by public institutions.

Leaders emerge if bureaucratic obstacles or strategic constraints are encountered that require high-level coordination.

However, with a positive path coefficient, transformational leadership can be optimized to increase employee engagement by improving the individualized consideration dimension through indicators of personal attention to employee needs and aspirations (TL16) and providing constructive feedback for employee development (TL20) where both indicators have the lowest loading factor value (TL16:0.836, TL20:0.837).

The results show consistency with previous studies where public service motivation has a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. The indicators with the largest loading factor value are in the dimension of attraction to public participation, self-sacrifice, and compassion. In line with what KPK employees do in eradicating corruption with the main tasks and functions are to enforce and prevent corruption crimes, where employees are motivated and have engagement with their work to save the country's financial or economy which should be used for the greatest benefit of society.

The result demonstrates a positive valence career shock where employees compensate for shock and disruptions with better career potential, as indicated by the loading factor of better career changes (CS10) and clearer career goals (CS14) and simple slope analysis shown in Figure 3. The CSxTL→EE moderation interaction shows that transformational leadership is not effective in giving impact on employee engagement when there is no moderation or when moderation is low (red line). When the moderation effect is equal to the mean average

(blue line), then transformational leadership increases employee engagement moderately. Transformational leadership appears to be effective in increasing employee engagement when the moderation effect is high (green line) and the slope of the line is steeper, indicating that the effectiveness of transformational leadership on employee engagement is higher if career shock is higher. This aligns with the results of the inner model test of CSxTL→EE interaction, which is significant, namely the t-statistic value of 2.199 (higher than 1.96) and p-value of 0.028 (less than 0.05).

Career shock is also the strongest variable affecting employee engagement and contributes to strengthening the influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement in such a way that it becomes significant. This shows that leadership is more effective in its influence when unexpected events occur.

On the other hand, the change in employment status as a career shock does not significantly affect the relationship between public service motivation and employee engagement. Simple slope analysis on Figure 4 shows the visualization of the interaction between career shock (CS) and public service motivation (PSM) on employee engagement (EE), which shows an increasing line but almost in the same slope with low (red line), medium (blue line), and high (green line) interaction. The increasing line shows that an increase in public service motivation affects the increase in employee engagement, but the almost same slope indicates that career shock interaction does not provide a significant moderation effect on the relationship. This is aligned with inner model test result of CSxPSM→EE interaction, which is not significant, namely the t-statistic value of 0.614 (below 1.96) and p-value of 0.539 (higher than 0.05).

The result shows that the motivation that a person has to contribute to society as a personal resource with stable and autonomous intrinsic motivation characteristics comes from within the individual based on the values believed by KPK employees, so it does not require moderation from external contingency factors of individual employees (Tang, An, Zhang, Xiao, & Li, 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study finds that transformational leadership in a public institution does not always have a significant effect on employee engagement, particularly for senior employees who demonstrate high public service motivation. Disruptive events as a positive valence career shock drive the effectiveness of leadership in increasing employee engagement, but the positive valence of career shock does not contribute to public service motivation in increasing employee engagement. The practical implication is that KPK should improve the quality of transformational leadership, especially related to the individualized consideration dimension to provide more personal attention to employee needs and aspirations and provide constructive feedback for employee development. In addition, managing the momentum of status transition through career development, especially encouraging opportunities for employees to pursue careers in other public agencies.

Further research is suggested to explore other variables that dominantly affect employee engagement, especially in public institutions that have uniqueness in terms of human resources such as KPK and are not limited to the presence of disruptive events in the form of changes in employment status. Employee engagement is important for KPK in carrying out its function of eradicating corruption to ensure the integrity of each individual.

Additionally, integrating quantitative and qualitative methods can provide a more thorough and deeper insight of employee engagement within the context of organizational transformation. In-depth interviews and discussion or case studies can explore the subjective experiences of employees in dealing with career shock, mechanisms of overcoming shocks, and contextual factors that affect engagement.

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