



Transformational Leadership and Employee Engagement: The Mediating Roles of Trust and Training

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Abstract

Background: Employee work engagement represents an important contributor to organizational performance, particularly for banks operating amid technological transformation, strong competition, and regulatory demands. Nevertheless, evidence explaining how trust and training simultaneously transmit the effect of transformational leadership to employee work engagement is still limited, especially within Indonesian banking institutions.

Objective: This study examines the influence of transformational leadership on employee work engagement and assesses trust and training as mediating mechanisms among employees of conventional banks in Sumbawa City, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia.

Methods: A quantitative cross-sectional approach was employed using data from 400 conventional bank employees selected through purposive sampling. Data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM).

Results: The results show significant positive effects of transformational leadership on employee work engagement ($\beta=0.169$), trust ($\beta=0.438$), and training ($\beta=0.481$). Employee work engagement is also positively and significantly associated with trust ($\beta=0.188$) and training ($\beta=0.327$). Both variables significantly transmit the effect of transformational leadership to engagement, although the indirect effect through training ($\beta=0.157$) is stronger than that through trust ($\beta=0.082$).

Conclusion: The findings indicate that transformational leadership strengthens employee work engagement through both a direct pathway and indirect pathways involving trust and training. This study extends leadership and human resource management literature by showing that these two mediators operate as complementary mechanisms. For banking organizations, the results emphasize the importance of transformational leadership practices, transparent and trust-based relationships, and sustained training programs to support employee engagement and organizational competitiveness.

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INTRODUCTION

Within contemporary settings, engagement simultaneously fosters productivity gains and establishes organizational differentiation via superior service delivery, innovative capacity, and personnel retention. Financial institutions increasingly recognize engagement as essential given mounting operational and market intricacy (Lamsam & Charoensukmongkol, 2023). Leadership methodologies constitute a recognized influential factor in augmenting workforce engagement. Separate from direct effects, the transformational leadership-engagement relationship operates through diverse psychological and structural organizational processes.

Over recent decades, research on the type of leadership that can bring organizations, companies and agencies in a better direction has been conducted, where the type of leadership is a determining factor for the success of a company to achieve the goals that have been set together. Transformational leadership has demonstrated effectiveness among European and non-European societies (Deng et al., 2023). HRM clarifies that Transformational Leadership influences employee performance (Liu et al., 2023). Work Engagement has a significant positive association with organizational commitment so that productivity can strengthen in a case study of banks in Nigeria. employee work engagement shows a positive association with trust in the involvement of employers and employees (Mehmood et al., 2023). Training, fair rewards and promotion opportunities, job security and performance appraisals, are positively and significantly associated with impersonal trust (Sultana & Khandakar, 2022). Banks in China Bartram et al. (2021) show that HPWS shows a positive association with the social climate and by estimating that the service climate will positively mediate the association between HPWS and work performance. Tan & Olaore (2022) also found that organizational learning and effectiveness, operational, employee productivity and management performance have a positive influence that affects staff effectiveness and efficiency across organizational levels.

Although transformational leadership and employee work engagement have been widely discussed, several research gaps remain. First, prior investigations tend to examine trust and training as separate mechanisms, so evidence on their concurrent mediating roles remains limited. Second, findings from Western and East Asian banking contexts should be interpreted cautiously in Indonesia because organizational culture, trust formation, and training opportunities may differ. Third, the literature reports inconsistent mediation patterns: trust has been identified as a full mediator in some studies Ahamed & Hassan (2014), whereas other research indicates partial mediation (Khoerunnisa et al., 2025; Khurohman & Desiana, 2024). Empirical comparisons of the relative strength of trust and training as mediators are also uncommon. To address these gaps, the present research evaluates a dual-mediation model involving employees of conventional banks in Sumbawa City, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia.

This research contributes novelty by assessing trust and training concurrently as two mediating pathways connecting transformational leadership with employee work engagement in the relatively underexamined Indonesian banking context. Rather than treating the two mediators independently, as is common in earlier work, the study compares the magnitude of their indirect effects. This approach offers a broader explanation of the processes through which transformational leadership may foster stronger employee engagement.

The study investigates both the direct contribution of transformational leadership to employee work engagement and the indirect pathways operating through trust and training among conventional-bank employees in Sumbawa City, West Nusa Tenggara. It also contributes to scholarship on leadership and human resource management. Theoretically, social exchange theory and human resource development theory are used to explain the two parallel mediation routes. Practically, the results are expected to assist bank management in strengthening transformational leadership practices, nurturing employee trust, and designing suitable training initiatives that support engagement and competitiveness. Understanding these pathways can help banking leaders formulate more focused approaches to employee motivation and participation.

Literature Review

Transformational Leadership in Relation to Employee Work Engagement

Khan et al. (2025) identify transformational leadership as comprising four principal dimensions: modeling of desired conduct, motivational communication, cognitive stimulation, and personalized developmental focus

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

Transformational Leadership and Trust

Within organizational contexts, trust proves essential for establishing productive and cooperative work partnerships

H2: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on trust.

Trust as a Driver of Employee Work Engagement

Trust functions as an important catalyst in elevating engagement. Personnel possessing elevated confidence in institutional and leader credibility experience greater workplace security and psychological comfort, thereby amplifying motivation and participation

H3: Trust has a positive effect on employee engagement.

Trust as a Mediator between Transformational Leadership and Employee Work Engagement

Beyond direct effects on engagement, transformational leadership exerts indirect influence through trust mechanisms

H4: Trust mediates the effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement.

Transformational Leadership and Training

Transformational leadership proves significant in advancing training deployment

H5: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on training.

Training and Its Association with Employee Work Engagement

Training contributes meaningfully to higher levels of employee work engagement.

H6: Training has a positive effect on employee engagement.

Training as a Mediator between Transformational Leadership and Employee Work Engagement

Training functions as a mediating mechanism within transformational leadership-engagement pathways

H7: Training mediates the effect of transformational leadership on employee engagement.

METHOD

A quantitative cross-sectional design was adopted, with observations obtained during a single period to assess the relationships specified in the proposed research model. This design permitted the empirical examination of the hypotheses using numerical data and statistical procedures.

The research population encompassed all personnel employed within conventional banking. This investigation involved 400 research participants. Primary data were gathered through questionnaire administration to the research participants. Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS software was employed as the analytical approach. The bootstrapping methodology was employed to determine the significance of the relationships.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Table1

Description of Respondent Characteristics

Characteristics	Categories	f	%	Dominating characteristics
Gender	Male	171	42,8	Female (57.3%)
	Female	229	57,3	
Workplace Bank	BCA	59	14,8	Independent (34.5%)
	BNI	97	24,3	
	BRI	106	26,5	
	Self-Sufficient	138	34,5	
Position	Account Officer / Relationship Officer	61	15,3	Counter (24.3%)
	Back Office / Operations	61	15,3	

Long Working Time	Customer Service	70	17,5	1–3 years (47.3%)
	IT Support / E-Channel	43	10,8	
	Marketing / Sales	67	16,8	
	Counter	97	24,3	
	Teller, Marketing / Sales	1	0,3	
	> 6 years old	81	20,3	
	1 – 3 years	189	47,3	
	4 – 6 years	130	32,5	

Source: processed data (2026)

Table 1 demonstrates respondent characteristics with female predominance (57.3%), indicating female representation leadership in the banking sector at the research site

Hypothesis Testing Results

Table 2

Hypothesis Testing Results

No	Hypothesis Statement	Results	Conclusion
1	Transformational leadership positively contributes to employee work engagement	$p=0.000$; $t=4.089$; $\beta=0,169$	Accepted
2	Transformational leadership positively contributes to employee trust	$p=0.000$; $t=10.959$; $\beta=0,438$	Accepted
3	Employee trust positively contributes to employee work engagement	$p=0.000$; $t=4.720$; $\beta=0,188$	Accepted
4	Employee trust transmits the effect of transformational leadership to employee work engagement	$p=0.000$; $t=3.879$; $\beta=0,082$	Accepted
5	Transformational leadership positively contributes to employee training	$p=0.000$; $t=13.277$; $\beta=0,481$	Accepted
6	Employee training positively contributes to employee work engagement	$p=0.000$; $t=8.369$; $\beta=0,327$	Accepted
7	Employee training transmits the effect of transformational leadership to employee work engagement	$p=0.000$; $t=6.463$; $\beta=0,157$	Accepted

Source: data processed (2026)

First hypothesis testing results demonstrate transformational leadership's positive engagement effects. Second hypothesis testing results reveal transformational leadership's positive trust effects. Third hypothesis testing results demonstrate trust's positive engagement effects. Fourth hypothesis testing results demonstrate trust mediation within transformational leadership-engagement pathways. Fifth hypothesis testing results reveal transformational leadership's positive training effects. Sixth hypothesis testing results demonstrate training's positive engagement effects. Seventh hypothesis testing results demonstrate training mediation within transformational leadership-engagement relationships

Discussion

Transformational Leadership and Its Influence on Employee Work Engagement

Statistical testing indicates that transformational leadership significantly and positively contributes to employee work engagement. This pattern supports transformational leadership theory, suggesting that employees become more involved in their work when leaders communicate direction clearly while providing inspiration and motivational support.

Islam et al. (2021) found that transformational leadership can foster employee work engagement by communicating a clear vision and offering support and motivation; trust also

facilitates employees' acceptance of organizational change. Kresna & Suryani (2025) further demonstrated that psychological empowerment and knowledge sharing reinforce engagement by promoting control, collaboration, and psychological capital. Transformational leaders have the capacity to establish psychological safety, while Gempesao et al. (2023) emphasized ethical leadership as a source of stronger motivation and commitment. These findings imply that banking organizations can sustain employee engagement by strengthening transformational leadership practices, communicating organizational direction clearly, supporting employee growth, and providing leadership development focused on communication and empowerment.

The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Trust

The statistical results establish a significant positive association between transformational leadership and trust. Higher levels of transformational leadership correspond with stronger employee trust, whereas weaker transformational leadership is associated with lower trust. This confirms transformational leadership as an important antecedent of trust. Accordingly, efforts to strengthen trust among conventional-bank employees in Sumbawa City, West Nusa Tenggara, may appropriately focus on improving transformational leadership practices.

Transformational leadership theory provides a basis for this result because inspirational leaders who consistently demonstrate integrity can cultivate employee trust. Open communication and constructive leader-employee relations are central to this leadership approach. Employees are more inclined to trust leaders when they experience genuine concern and support and when leaders' actions remain consistent with their stated commitments. Transformational leaders also encourage transparency in organizational decision making. Together, these behaviors explain why transformational leadership can strengthen organizational trust.

Prior empirical work likewise shows that transformational leadership can strengthen employee trust through psychological and organizational processes. Lee et al. (2024) reported that this leadership style reinforces perceptions of leader ability, benevolence, and integrity, thereby increasing confidence in organizational decisions. Related evidence from Dalmış & Bukeç (2022) and Akter et al. (2024) associates transformational leadership with stronger trust through perceived fairness and organizational transparency. Liu et al. (2023) further identified trust as an intervening mechanism linking transformational leadership with employee outcomes including well-being, commitment, and job satisfaction, although organizational culture may condition these relationships (Nazarian et al., 2022). For banking management, the implication is to reinforce honest, consistent, and transparent leadership while sustaining a culture of integrity and professionalism so that trusting and harmonious working relationships can develop over time.

Trust and Its Influence on Employee Work Engagement

The analysis demonstrates that employee trust makes a statistically significant positive contribution to employee work engagement. This finding accords with social-relational views of organizations, in which trust provides an essential basis for cooperative and constructive relationships at work.

Existing evidence generally links organizational trust with stronger employee work engagement. Ugwu et al. (2014) showed that trust enhances employees' security and confidence and, in turn, their engagement, with psychological empowerment reinforcing this association. Zanabazar et al. (2024) identified employee loyalty as a mediator between trust and engagement, whereas Khawaja & Soomro (2021) stressed trust in management, supervisors, and colleagues as an important engagement resource. Awad et al. (2024) additionally showed that internal marketing and a constructive conflict-management climate can reinforce this relationship, while Decuyper & Schaufeli (2021) reported that trust in leaders explains meaningful variation in engagement. For banking organizations, these findings support the establishment of fair and transparent work arrangements, open communication, and recognition of employee contributions to maintain both trust and work engagement.

The Mediating Function of Trust between Transformational Leadership and Employee Work Engagement

The mediation test confirms that trust carries part of the effect of transformational leadership to employee work engagement. Stronger transformational leadership promotes trust, which subsequently supports greater engagement; conversely, reduced transformational leadership may weaken trust and thereby diminish engagement. Trust therefore represents an important pathway through which transformational leadership affects employees' involvement in their work. The significant indirect effect indicates that engagement can be strengthened by leadership practices capable of developing employee trust.

Social exchange theory helps explain this mediation process by viewing leader–employee relations as reciprocal exchanges. When leaders demonstrate support, concern, and integrity, employees are more likely to develop trust and respond with stronger involvement in their work. Such reciprocity also deepens employees' emotional connection with the organization. Trust therefore provides a central relational mechanism through which transformational leadership is translated into higher employee work engagement.

Previous research also positions trust as an important intervening variable between transformational leadership and employee work engagement. Ul Hassan & Ikramullah (2024) found both direct and indirect leadership effects, with trust and self-efficacy operating as parallel mediators. Islam et al. (2021) similarly showed that transformational leadership improves perceptions of organizational change, which then reinforce trust and engagement, while Ahamed & Hassan (2014) identified a full mediation pattern. By contrast, Khurohman & Desiana (2024) and Khoerunnisa et al. (2025) reported partial mediation alongside factors such as perceived organizational support. These results suggest that banks should cultivate transformational leadership through consistent and honest conduct, close working relationships, and intensive communication so that employee trust can develop and ultimately reinforce engagement.

The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Training

The empirical analysis identifies a significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and training. Stronger transformational leadership is associated with greater support for training, while weaker leadership corresponds with reduced training support. Transformational leadership can therefore be regarded as an important driver of training. For conventional-bank employees in Sumbawa City, West Nusa Tenggara, improving training may consequently begin with strengthening transformational leadership practices.

This result is compatible with transformational leadership theory, particularly its emphasis on developing employees' potential. Transformational leaders encourage the improvement of employee competence and capability and can stimulate organizations to provide training that is relevant to work requirements. Training, in turn, expands the knowledge and skills employees need to perform effectively. By encouraging continuous learning and personal development, transformational leaders create conditions that support the delivery and use of training within the organization.

Prior studies also associate transformational leadership with employee learning and development. Dvir et al. (2002) showed that transformational leadership supports learning and capability building through training, with subsequent performance benefits. Akdere & Egan (2020) and Hariharan & Anand (2023) similarly found that transformational leaders can foster environments conducive to continuous learning and effective training. Al-Harthy (2016) and Nazarian et al. (2022) further positioned training as an intervening mechanism linking transformational leadership with performance and organizational learning, while Komara et al. (2025) emphasized the development of a strong learning culture. In banking practice, leaders should therefore actively support relevant training, broaden development opportunities, and cultivate a work environment that encourages continuous learning so employees remain competent and prepared for change.

Training and Its Effect on Employee Work Engagement

The results provide statistical evidence that training contributes positively and significantly to employee work engagement.

This result is consistent with human resource development theory, which regards training as a central means of building and strengthening employee competence. Empirical literature suggests that training can enhance work engagement by developing both employee competence and relevant psychological resources. Arokiasamy et al. (2025) found that well-designed training strengthens skills and self-confidence, which can promote engagement and productivity. Training and career development can increase motivation and engagement, particularly when development activities correspond to employees' job needs. Other evidence indicates that training may foster engagement through self-efficacy, organization-based self-esteem, technological competence, and job readiness (Smt. Sumela Chatterjee, 2023). Banking organizations should therefore treat training as a core human-resource development strategy by providing relevant learning opportunities, evaluating them continuously, and supporting competency development to sustain employee engagement.

The Mediating Function of Training between Transformational Leadership and Employee Work Engagement

The indirect-effect results indicate that training mediates the association between transformational leadership and employee work engagement. Transformational leadership can increase organizational support for training, and this development process subsequently contributes to stronger engagement. Conversely, weak transformational leadership may limit training support and indirectly reduce employee involvement. Training thus constitutes a meaningful developmental pathway through which transformational leadership influences work engagement. The significant mediation effect suggests that organizations can promote engagement by combining stronger transformational leadership with sustained employee development.

Human resource development theory explains this pathway by proposing that supportive leadership facilitates competency development through training. Transformational leaders do more than motivate employees; they also encourage the enhancement of employee capabilities. Appropriate training supplies knowledge and skills relevant to work requirements and can increase employees' confidence in performing their responsibilities. Greater perceived capability can then support stronger involvement in both work and the organization. Training consequently reinforces the link between transformational leadership and employee work engagement.

Earlier research has shown that transformational leadership can improve employee work engagement through psychological processes including optimism, intrinsic motivation, and perceived meaningfulness. Tims et al. (2011) observed that transformational leadership behaviors increase employees' daily optimism and subsequently their enthusiasm and engagement. Lai et al. (2020) likewise found that transformational leadership strengthens meaningfulness at work, which contributes to engagement and performance. Although optimism and meaningfulness have received considerable attention as mediators (Mukul, 2015), comparatively less evidence addresses training as an intervening mechanism. Further examination of training is therefore warranted. In practice, banking organizations should integrate transformational leadership with structured, job-relevant training to strengthen employee competence, motivation, and sustained engagement.

CONCLUSION

Transformational leadership is shown to strengthen employee work engagement through a direct effect as well as indirect effects transmitted through employee trust and training. Practically, these findings suggest banking organizations should reinforce transformational leadership implementation through distinct vision articulation, communication effectiveness, and personnel development attention. This investigation acknowledges several constraining factors worthy of consideration

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION STATEMENT

Abdi Brilliant Rakasiwi contributed to the conceptualization, research design, data collection, data analysis, interpretation of findings, and manuscript preparation. Alni Rahmawati contributed to the development of the research framework, supervision, interpretation of results, critical review, and revision of the manuscript. Both authors reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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