

## **The transformational and toxic leadership effect on employee retention**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to define the mediation role related to job satisfaction on employee retention and its effect on transformational and toxic leadership styles. This is a research design with the Structural Equation Model used to evaluate the hypothesis testing. The purposive sampling method was used to determine the sample size of lecturers and academic staff of some universities in Jakarta. The result showed that transformational leadership is more dominant in influencing employee retention than toxic leadership, directly or indirectly through job satisfaction.

**Keywords:** employee retention; job satisfaction; toxic leadership; transformational leadership.

**JEL Classification:** M41, M42

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Every business aims to determine the best strategy to run and develop optimally for sustainable growth. Employees are the main factor that determines whether the goals to be achieved by a company will meet the predetermined targets. Yalabik et al. (2017) stated that companies with loyal and highly engaged employees are likely to experience the smooth running of their business and vice versa. The research showed that job satisfaction is closely related to employee engagement in the company. Hence it is the company's job to keep employees working for the organization for an extended period as an indicator of success. Mandhanya (2016) explained that employees who work for a relatively long time have good abilities and competencies, making it easier for them to change jobs. Therefore, companies must ensure high employee retention to achieve set objectives.

Employee job satisfaction is influenced by many factors and leadership styles (Bagyo, 2013). The most examined leadership concept related to organizational behavior and management is transformational leadership. It displays a leadership style in which leaders use optimism, enthusiasm, and emotional appeal to inspire employees to adopt the company's values, vision, mission, and goals. Orunbon et al. (2022) found teachers' job satisfaction as well as a toxic leadership with a negative relationship in Lagos State tertiary institutions. Bakkal et al. (2019) stated that job satisfaction is a mediator in toxic leadership's negative effect on the dimension of self-seeking behavior and appreciativeness on employee retention.

The overall theory of leadership always focuses on the positive aspect, however, employees also experience bad leadership, resulting in an unproductive contribution to the company. An example is the exhibition of toxic and destructive behavior by leaders, such as excessive blame on subordinates for mistakes, unreasonable work demands, and insulting their abilities, which can cause physical and emotional harm. These leaders generally accentuate personal interests more than organizational ones, and consequently tends to mediate the effect of job stress and satisfaction (Tezcan Uysal, 2019). Therefore, this research analyzed the impact of toxic leadership on job satisfaction, which is relatively limited, especially in Indonesia. Based on the cultural dimension of Hofstede, Indonesians with low scores on this dimension tend to be pessimistic and cynical. People with this orientation have the perception that societal norms constrain their actions.

This research analyzed three direct effects of leadership, namely transformational leadership as well as job satisfaction, toxic leadership as well as job satisfaction, then job satisfaction as well as employee retention. It also evaluated transformational and toxic leadership styles toward employee retention through job satisfaction.

## **HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT**

According to Anindita & Tofan (2020), a transformational leadership style increases job satisfaction. Roz (2019) stated the significant effect of transformational leadership on job satisfaction, while Abelha et al. (2018) reported that it is positively associated with job satisfaction. Sutrisno et al. (2020) noted that this leadership type significantly impacted employee job satisfaction. Meanwhile, Dong et al. (2021) explained that transformational leadership positively impacted job satisfaction.

H1: Transformational leadership positively affects job satisfaction.

Research by Orunbon et al. (2022) concluded a relationship between toxic leadership as well as job satisfaction negatively. Bakkal et al. (2019) stated that toxic leadership adversely affected job satisfaction, while Omar & Ahmad (2018) reported toxic leadership as well as job satisfaction with a negative relationship. According to H. Mahmood et al. (2019), toxic leadership negatively correlates with job satisfaction.

H2: Toxic leadership negatively affects job satisfaction.

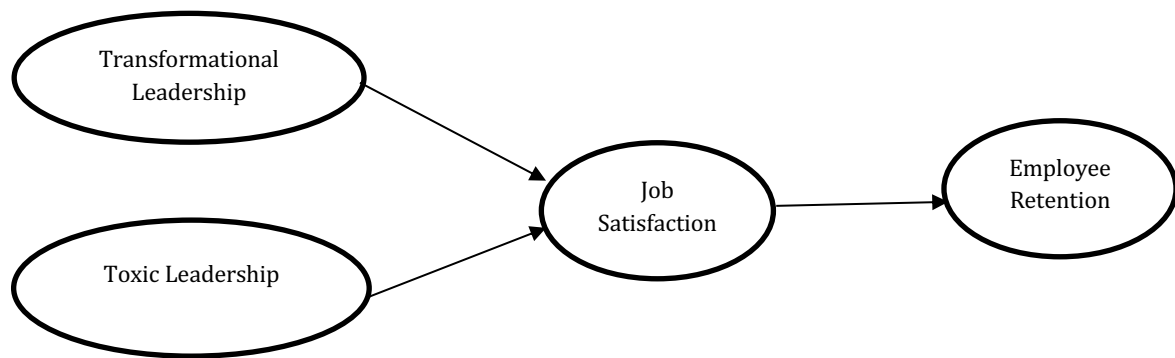
Job satisfaction influences and has a positive relationship with employee retention (Biason, 2020; Rahmawati, 2018). Furthermore, according to Halim et al. (2021), satisfied employees had a high possibility of being retained in the same organization. Research by Ramapriya & Sudhamathi (2020) showed the association between work satisfaction as well as employee retention.

H3: Job satisfaction positively affects employee retention.

Lim et al. (2017) studied the impact of transformational leadership on turnover intention through job satisfaction. Furthermore, Saklit (2017) found leadership style directly or indirectly influenced turnover intention through job satisfaction. According to Natawijaya et al. (2018), job satisfaction insignificantly mediates the negative leadership impact on the turnover intention. Angelo & Supartha (2020) also investigated that job satisfaction cannot mediate the influence of transformational leadership on turnover intention.

H4: Transformational leadership positively affects employee retention mediated by job satisfaction.

H5: Toxic leadership negatively affects employee retention mediated by job satisfaction.



**Figure 1.**  
**Conceptual Framework**

## METHOD

The hypothesis testing method was used to examine the effect of toxic and transformational leadership on job satisfaction as well as its impact on employee retention. The cross-sectional process was used to collect from lecturers as well as supporting staff of the Economics and Business Faculty, Trisakti University.

This research consists of two independent (transformational leadership and toxic leadership), one dependent (employee retention), and one intervening (job satisfaction) variable. The transformational and toxic leadership were measured using a 7 and 11 statement item based on the techniques of Pasha et al. (2017) and Ozer et al. (2017), respectively. Meanwhile, job satisfaction and employee retention were measured using 8 and 4 statement items adapted from studies conducted by Chao et al. (2013) and Biason (2020). All variables are interval scales as well as using a 5-point Likert scale with a description of 1 (strongly disagree) until 5 (strongly agree).

The sample comprises 155 permanent lecturers and supporting staff from the Economics and Business Faculty, Trisakti University. The samples used are at least five times the indicators in accordance with the research by Hair (2021). Hence the total sample used is 30 indicators x 5, which equals 150 respondents.

All indicators meet the validity and reliability test requirements, with a loading factor of >0.45 for the validity test and Cronbach alpha >0.6 for the reliability (Hair, 2021).

**Table 1**  
**Testing the Validity and Reliability of Research Variables**

Variable	Factor Loading	Conclusion	Cronbach Alpha	Conclusion
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>				
I believe what my boss said.	0.791	Valid	0.943	Reliable
Leaders communicate a clear vision.	0.903	Valid		
Leaders help to provide feedback on my performance.	0.877	Valid		
I believe the management cares about their employees	0.887	Valid		
Leaders inform employees of future expectations regarding	0.886	Valid		

Variable	Factor Loading	Conclusion	Cronbach Alpha	Conclusion
their performance.				
Leaders involve employees while making important decisions.	0.819	Valid		
Leaders want to listen and discuss the existing problems.	0.872	Valid		
<b>Toxic Leadership</b>				
Leaders do not want to communicate with employees.	0.777	Valid		
The leader complains about an employee's performance in the presence of others.	0.802	Valid		
Leaders humiliate employees in public.	0.842	Valid		
Leaders exhibit behavior that can embarrass employees in public.	0.853	Valid		
Leaders always remind employees of their mistakes.	0.698	Valid		
Leaders say employees are not working efficiently.	0.782	Valid	0.941	Reliable
Leaders do not respect employees.	0.858	Valid		
Leaders portray opposing attitudes without first listening to employees' explanations.	0.871	Valid		
Leaders do not allow innovations.	0.764	Valid		
Leaders are not flexible toward employees.	0.840	Valid		
Commands from the leader are the most important thing.	0.244	Not Valid		
<b>Job Satisfaction</b>				
I am satisfied with my salary and benefits.	0.652	Valid		
I am satisfied with my position.	0.709	Valid		
I am happy to use my expertise to participate in providing services in my field of work.	0.656	Valid		
I am happy to serve and help ensure the safety of the academic community.	0.653	Valid		
I feel satisfied with the achievements I obtained in the work environment.	0.709	Valid	0.861	Reliable
I am satisfied with my work environment.	0.787	Valid		
I am satisfied with the welfare and holiday policy provided.	0.730	Valid		
I am satisfied with the way the current system works.	0.807	Valid		
<b>Employee Retention</b>				
I want to stay in this organization because: There is career progression.	0.725	Valid	0.811	Reliable

Variable	Factor Loading	Conclusion	Cronbach Alpha	Conclusion
Availability of retirement benefits.	0.851	Valid		
An increase in salary according to regularization.	0.804	Valid		
Job description according to my ability, experience, and education.	0.815	Valid		

Source: Data processed (2021)

The hypothesis is tested using the Structural Equation Model (SEM), a developing model with theoretical solid evidence. SEM functions as a confirmatory technique to test a causal relationship in which changes in one variable are caused by changes in others based on pre-existing theories.

The two structural equations used in this research are as follows:

$$JS = \alpha_1 TRL + \alpha_2 Toxic + \epsilon_1$$

$$ER = \beta_1 JS + \epsilon_2$$

Where:

ER = Employee Retention

JS = Job Satisfaction

TRL = Transformational Leadership

Toxic = Toxic Leadership

$\alpha_1, \alpha_2$  = Estimated coefficient

$\epsilon_1, \epsilon_2$  = Residual

Table 2 shows the results of the model fit test, and due to its ability to meet some of the requirements, it continued to the theoretical hypothesis testing phase.

**Table 2**  
**The goodness of Fit Model**

The goodness of Fit Index	Criteria	Result	Conclusion
Chi-square	Expected small	808.5019	
Significance probability	$\geq 0.05$	0.000	Unfit
RMSEA	$\leq 0.10$	0.092	Fit
CMIN/DF	1 -5	2.185	Fit
GFI	0.721	0.748	Unfit
IFI	0.861	0.861	Marginal fit
TLI	0.845	0.845	Marginal fit
CFI	0.859	0.859	Marginal fit

Source: Data processed (2021)

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Result

The descriptive statistic processing of the variables is shown in table 3.

**Table 3**  
**Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables**

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Transformational Leadership	3.5373	0.8141
Toxic Leadership	2.2445	0.8923
Job Satisfaction	3.4919	0.6395
Employee Retention	3.4758	0.7955

Source: processed data (2021)

Descriptive statistics for transformational leadership variables produce a mean value of 3.5373, therefore the respondents perceived that their leaders applied this style more often. Respondents responded fairly badly to the toxic leadership variable, as indicated by the average value of 2.2445. Job satisfaction's mean of 3.4919 indicated that employees have fairly high satisfaction. Meanwhile, the average value for the employee retention variable is 3.4758, indicating that the respondents tend to keep working at the organization. Table 4 shows the hypothesis testing of the descriptive statistics:

**Table 4**  
**Hypothesis Testing**

Hypothesis	Estimate	p-value	Decision
H1: Transformational leadership positively affects the job satisfaction	0.6373	0.000	Supported
H2: Toxic leadership negatively affects the job satisfaction	-0.0381	0.337	Not supported
H3: Job satisfaction positively affects the employee retention	0.6086	0.000	Supported
H4: Transformational leadership positively affects employee retention mediated by job satisfaction	0.378	0.000	Supported
H5: Toxic leadership negatively affects employee retention mediated by job satisfaction	-0.023	0.338	Not supported

Source: Data processed (2021)

### Discussion

The first hypothesis showed that transformational leadership positively impacts job satisfaction. This is in accordance with Asencio (2016), that there is a positive relationship between both transactional as well as transformational leadership and employee trust toward leaders with employee job satisfaction. Rothfelder et al. (2012) stated that leaders can be role models, have charisma, treat employees as individuals in need of attention, and listen to subordinates' aspirations. A visionary-focused leader with behaviors that contemplate an organization's vision positively by encouraging its members to achieve goals in accordance with the company's vision is transformational leadership. This is usually conducted through a creative problem-solving model, demonstrating concern for the member's individual needs, and delivering rewards when organizational goals are achieved (Balwant, 2019). Masa'deh et al. (2016) defined transformational leadership as a motivational leadership style that includes showing a clear organizational vision as well as motivating employees to work accordingly. This research further affirmed that this process is achievable by

building connections with employees to understand their needs, help achieve their potential, and provide maximum results for the organization.

The second hypothesis showed that toxic leaders do not significantly negatively affect job satisfaction. The pioneering study related to toxic leadership was Lipman-Blumen, (2005), which defined it as a process where leaders inflict serious harm on followers and the organization due to their bad behavior. Burns (2017) stated that their strong personality has the ability to influence individuals as well as organizations in the long term. There are three elements in toxic leadership, namely lack of concern for the welfare of subordinates, a personality that negatively influences the organizational environment, as well as subordinates' belief that the leaders are selfish. This finding is similar to Bakkal et al. (2019) found that toxic leadership for the dimension of self-seeking, selfishness, and a negative state of mind does not negatively impact job satisfaction. However, this is different from the research by Nafei (2019), stating that toxic leadership significantly affects job satisfaction. Desai (2018) indicated that job satisfaction positively correlates with employee retention. Research by Zanabazar & Jigjiddorj (2018) also noted that employee satisfaction correlates with retention.

The third hypothesis showed job satisfaction positively affects employee retention. It affects a person's desire to stay or leave the organization and emerges from employees' evaluation of their job (Robbins & Judge, 2009). Dechawatanapaisal (2018) reported that employees' positive perceptions of jobs are essential in enhancing their retention in the organization. This research support empirical research conducted by Salman et al. (2016) which found a significant relationship between job satisfaction as well as employee retention. Desai (2018) showed that job satisfaction positively correlates with employee retention. Research by Zanabazar & Jigjiddorj (2018) also confirmed that employee satisfaction correlates with retention.

The fourth hypothesis showed transformational leadership positively affects employee retention mediated by job satisfaction. Therefore, it can be concluded that job satisfaction plays a mediator role in the effect of transformational leadership on employee retention. Leaders who implement a good leadership style can increase employees' job satisfaction, affecting their retention (Yukl, 2012). Leaders who pay more attention to their employees, especially job satisfaction, decrease their intention to leave (Robinson & Aprilia, 2005). When leaders become sources of dissatisfaction for employees, their desire to stay at the company decreases (Badawy & Bassiouny, 2014).

The last hypothesis is not supported, and it differs from the research by Mathieu et al. (2016) that abusive leadership influences employee retention through job satisfaction. Nidadhavolu (2018) also showed that toxic leadership influences employee retention and job satisfaction. This is in accordance with Bakkal et al. (2019) that job satisfaction is not a mediator in the negative effect of toxic leadership for dimension selfishness and a negative state of mind on employee retention.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, the two direct and direct hypotheses not supported by this research are toxic leadership and job satisfaction as well as toxic leadership through job satisfaction. Transformational leadership positively affects job satisfaction, which in turn positively affects employee retention, thereby resulting in an indirect effect. Toxic leadership was not proven to significantly and negatively affect job satisfaction, which indirectly failed to mediate its negative effect on employee retention.

The managerial implication based on these findings is that the company must entrust a leader who treats employees as work partners compared to those who consider them as objects to be monitored, controlled, and evaluated for their mistakes. Leaders who make employees partners are believed to create high engagement, loyalty, and commitment, thereby decreasing their possibility of

leaving for another job. This is one of the benchmark indicators of a company's success in running a business process.

Further research is suggested to investigate the effect of other variables, such as job stress, work environment, and organizational commitment, on employee retention, either directly or indirectly through job satisfaction (Elmi et al., 2020; Narasuci et al., 2018). In addition, subsequent studies need to expand the research setting in all faculties of Universitas Trisakti and other industries.

### **Author Contribution**

Tanuwijaya wrote this research, while Tanuwijaya and Jakaria collected data. All authors conducted data analysis and interpretation and revised the article until it was finally approved for publication.

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### **Conflicts of Interest**

The authors certify that they do not have affiliations with any organization or entity with any financial interest, such as honoraria, educational grants, participation in the speakers' bureau, membership, employment, consultancies, stock ownership, or other equity interests, and expert testimony or patent-licensing arrangements. They are also not affiliated with non-financial interests, such as personal or professional relationships, affiliations, knowledge, or beliefs in the subject matter or materials discussed in this manuscript.

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